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ABSTRACT

In 1994, the Carnegie Corporation called for an action agenda to promote responsible parenthood, guarantee quality child care choice, ensure good health and protection, and mobilize communities to support young children and families. In 1996, the Corporation created the Starting Points grant program to encourage states and communities to address the challenges posed by its earlier report. In 1999, the National Center for Children in Poverty was asked to undertake the Starting Points Assessment Project, a descriptive assessment of the initiative. This report documents the findings of the Starting Points Assessment Project. The report is organized in three sections. Section 1 provides an overview of the role of the Carnegie Corporation in the Starting Points initiative and of its implementation, describes the major activities carried out at each site, and describes the assessment project. Section 2 is the cross-site analysis, offering a systematic overview of the variation among the sites in terms of the political and policy context, the implementation approaches, the site-specific and initiative-specific mediators that influenced what occurred at the site, and the impact and outcomes. Section 3 distills the key lessons of the initiative and highlights their implications for future public and private funders. The report's two appendices include a format for the draft final progress reports for Starting Point grantees and selected state demographic and policy indicators. (Contains 19 endnotes.) (KB)

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LEARNING FROM STARTING POINTS

Findings from the Starting Points Assessment Project

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LEARNING FROM STARTING POINTS

Findings from the Starting Points Assessment Project

Prepared by
JANE KNITZER

With the assistance of
FIDA ADELY

October 2001

NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY
MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY

www.nccp.org

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) was established in 1989 at the School of Public Health, Columbia University, with core support from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The Center's mission is to identify and promote strategies that prevent child poverty in the United States and that improve the lives of low-income children and their families.

NCCP:

- Places a special emphasis on preventing or alleviating poverty among children under age six because young child poverty poses particularly serious risks to children's healthy growth and development.
- Conducts sound research to identify and promote wise investments in low-income families that have important long-term benefits for children, families, their communities, their states, and the nation as a whole.
- Employs a multi-disciplinary approach to build bridges between academic research, field-based knowledge of the experiences of low-income families raising children, attitudinal research, and the development of public and private sector initiatives for low-income families with children.
- Works to accurately, effectively, clearly, and broadly communicate its research in compelling ways and to synthesize relevant research to meet the needs of key audiences that work on issues affecting low-income families.
- Helps key stakeholders and the general public understand and effectively respond to the constantly changing face of child poverty. NCCP does this by assessing and tracking: the definition and measurement of child poverty; the impact of child poverty on various sub-populations; the effects of particular policies on low-income families and children; and public attitudes and awareness regarding child poverty, low-income families, and related issues.

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5

INTRODUCTION 10

How the Report is Organized

SECTION 1
Starting Points Initiative: An Overview 11

The Design and Implementation of the Starting Points Initiative: The View from the Carnegie Corporation of New York 11

The Design Strategy 11

The Implementation Approach 11

Starting Points in Action: The View from the Sites 12

The Starting Points Assessment Project Methodology 15

SECTION 2
The Cross-Site Analysis 16

The Analytic Framework 16

The Findings 16

Contextual Factors 16

The National Context

The State Context

The Demographic Context

The Policy Context

The Political Context

The Starting Points Site Context

Implementation Factors 21

The Leadership Patterns

The Substantive Foci

The Target Populations

The Strategies

Mediating Factors 24

Site-Specific Facilitating Factors

Initiative-Specific Facilitating Factors

Site-Specific Factors Posing Challenges

Initiative-Specific Factors Posing Challenges

Impacts and Outcomes 27

Observable Accomplishments

Process Changes

SECTION 3
Starting Points in a Larger Perspective: Summary and Lessons 29

The Big Picture 29

Did Starting Points Achieve Its Goals? 30

Key Lessons for Funders and Policymakers 30

On the Culture of Foundation Initiatives

Lessons for Funders Regarding Substantive Directions

CONCLUSION 33

Endnotes 34

Appendix A: Format for Draft Final Progress Narrative Report for Starting Points Grantees 35

Appendix B: Selected State Demographic and Policy Indicators 36

Learning from Starting Points: Findings from the Starting Points Assessment Project

prepared by Jane Knitzer
with the assistance of Fida Adely

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Executive Summary

In 1994, the Carnegie Corporation of New York issued a report titled *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children*.[1] Calling its findings "a quiet crisis," the report urged the federal government, states, community leaders, educators, health care decision-makers, service providers, business, leaders, parents, and the philanthropic community to actively work toward four broad goals: promoting responsible parenthood, guaranteeing child care choices, ensuring good health and protection, and mobilizing communities to support young children and their families.

Heeding its own call, in January 1996, the Carnegie Corporation made the first awards for the Starting Points States and Communities Partnership for Young Children Grants, a four-and-a-half year, $7 million initiative. Focusing on program improvement, policy development, and public engagement and awareness, the aim was to serve as a catalyst to seed activities to spur both short and long-term systems change within selected states and communities.

In 1999, the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) was asked to undertake an assessment of Starting Points to document the variations in context, structure, activities, and accomplishments across the 11 sites that were funded throughout the initiative, including four city sites: Baltimore, Boston, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco; and seven states: Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia.

The cross-site assessment focused on the following questions:

- What were the variations in the structure, auspices, and leadership across the sites?
- How did the demographic, policy, economic, and political contexts vary across the sites?
- What was the range of activities and accomplishments across the sites?
- What were the most common positive and negative mediating factors across the sites?
- How did the sites perceive the strengths and limitations of the Starting Points initiative?
- What were the collective lessons and implications for future multisite early childhood systems change initiatives?

Findings from the assessment, based on reviews of written materials, interviews and debriefing of key informants, and analysis of the data, are highlighted below. The full report is available on the Internet at www.nccp.org and in paper from the Publications Department of NCCP. Profiles of the individual Starting Points sites are also on NCCP's Web site.

THE STARTING POINTS INITIATIVE

The View from the Carnegie Corporation

The initial request for proposals for a two-year award was quite broad. It asked applicants to provide a background/needs statement and to describe proposed work that would lead to demonstrated progress in:

- Mobilizing stakeholders.
- Strengthening public and private sector policies.
- Improving the quality of programs.
- Encouraging continuous learning and development.

In Phase II, the Carnegie Corporation defined more focused objectives, asking the sites to: "establish and meet measurable, concrete outcomes based on systematic strategic plans that concentrate on program and policy development, [and address] the evaluation and dissemination of model approaches on a city or statewide basis."

Consistent with the initial design, there were two other major components to the Starting Points initiative. The first involved the participation of a network of national intermediary organizations, while the second called for support for a series of national initiatives intended to keep the spotlight on the importance of investing in early childhood programs and policies.

Starting Points was the catalyst for concentrated networking and activities in 11 sites that had, by the end, largely changed the threshold level of expectation, communication, vision, policy, and/or practice regarding important aspects of the well-being of young children.

Starting Points in Action: The View from the Sites

To provide a context for the findings, a very brief overview of each of the sites follows. More detailed descriptions may be found in the full report; profiles approved by the sites may be found at www.nccp.org.

BALTIMORE initially focused on program development aimed at integrating child health, family support, and child development in a service model. Later, its service-focused strategy became integrated into a citywide community mobilization strategy.

BOSTON crafted a two-tiered strategy: program development at a neighborhood level integrating a family support model for young children and a citywide policy/advocacy strategy addressing early care and education and child health.

COLORADO developed, refined, and implemented a statewide program model to promote improved parenting and early language development for infants and toddlers.

FLORIDA focused primarily on improving the policy context for early care and education. The site emphasized innovative public education strategies about early brain development and connections to the business community. The effort was carried out through an informal collaboration among state-level child advocates.

HAWAII evolved into a two-tiered approach, fostering local community leadership and building state-level outcome-oriented public/private partnerships.

NORTH CAROLINA focused primarily on designing and implementing a strategic plan for enhancing technical assistance to local communities in order to accomplish the goals of Smart Start, a preexisting comprehensive statewide early childhood systems change and program enhancement initiative.

PITTSBURGH focused on building a series of broad coalitions and partnerships to promote a family support and prevention agenda.

RHODE ISLAND used two major strategies—policy development and public engagement—to address child care and health issues.

SAN FRANCISCO focused on building a neutral leadership forum for bringing together different stakeholders and then developing and implementing a policy agenda focused primarily on issues related to child care.

VERMONT focused on strengthening networks among stakeholders in the early childhood community, engaging the business community in child care, and developing new tools and policies to improve the quality of early care and educational settings.

WEST VIRGINIA crafted a two-tiered strategy, one focused on developing a network of Starting Points centers for families with young children at the local level, the other focused on policy development and public awareness at the state level.

THE FINDINGS IN BRIEF

The findings highlighted below address contextual, implementation, and mediating factors.

Contextual Factors

Contextual factors important to the Starting Points initiative included national, state, and site-specific factors. The national context was marked by new federal initiatives, the enactment of welfare reform legislation and the state Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP), a doubling of the funding for the Child Care Development Fund, and the rapid implementation of Early Head Start programs. It was also marked by activities seeded by the Carnegie Corporation[2] to promote attention to young children. In most states, investments of state dollars in child development and family support programs also expanded.[3]

From a site-specific perspective, there was considerable variation in the larger state demographic and policy context. For instance, the population of children under age six in the state sites ranged from a low of 49,000

in Vermont to 1.1 million in Florida, while the percentage of young children living in families with incomes at or under 200 percent of the poverty level ranged from 37 percent in Colorado to 50 percent in Florida.

The ways in which the sites used the Starting Points grants also varied. In states, for example, the grant leadership came from officials within government, advocates, a statewide public-private partnership, and a private organization created in response to the initiative. In cities, leadership came from within a university, a community service agency, a mayor's office, and a newly created nonprofit entity.

Almost all of the sites used Carnegie Corporation funds to support staff and activities that could not typically tap public funds, but that were key to building momentum for change. For example, funds were used to design and publish compelling materials and to hold a retreat for state legislators on early childhood.

Implementation Factors

There was enormous variation across sites with respect to emphases and strategies. Some sites focused almost exclusively on program and service delivery improvement, while others combined these with policy and public engagement strategies. While most sites considered child care and early education a central focus, several concentrated primarily on family support, and a few included some attention to child health. Some sites were located in jurisdictions that already had a vision of how to improve services and informal supports for families with young children, while others, particularly the city-level sites, used the Starting Points grant to develop a vision. In most sites, the approach that evolved seemed to fit with the local political and service culture in interesting and sometimes unexpected ways. For example, in a state that had many formal interagency and community-based forums, the energy to implement Starting Points came from an informal set of partnerships. In contrast, a city that had been described as "service-rich" but with no focal point for policy agenda-setting created a formal leadership mechanism.

Notwithstanding these variations, the sites primarily adopted five core strategies, sometimes separately, sometimes in combination with others, to achieve their goals. These strategies involved efforts to: (1) influence policies and increase resources, (2) design, expand, and improve services; (3) build new alliances and leadership among early childhood leaders, parents, and others, (4) promote public awareness and engagement; and (5) improve data and promote outcome-oriented policies.

Examples of Activities to Implement the Core Strategies

Influence Policy

- Increase public and private resources
- Enact comprehensive state legislation
- Use federal programs to improve basic state policies
- Conduct/staff strategic policy analysis and planning
- Mobilize advocacy coalitions explicitly to support policy initiatives
- Implement and monitor policy initiatives

Improve Programs

- Expand and improve existing programs by making them more comprehensive or extending the age range
- Design, pilot, and expand program models within a city or across a state
- Create tools to improve quality through program assessments, best practice manuals, and cross-setting standards
- Create state or citywide mechanisms, such as child care funds, to support quality improvement initiatives
- Implement technical assistance and strategies for program providers and managers at the state and city levels
- Create networks of early childhood providers to facilitate advocacy, peer support, and professional development
- Expand the early childhood agenda to incorporate a richer array of strategies

Reach Out to New Stakeholders and Build New Leadership

- Outreach to the business community
- Build parent leadership
- Engage new professional partners
- Create new foci for broad-based community leadership

Promote Public Awareness and Engagement

- Build closer ties with the media and developing substantive stories on early development
- Produce easily accessible information targeted to policymakers through media events, issue briefs, and briefings

Improve Outcome and Other Data

- Build support for database infrastructure
- Develop meaningful indicators

Mediating Factors

The sites reported three clusters of mediating factors: site-specific factors, rooted in the political and leadership context at the site; initiative-specific factors, rooted in the decisions of the Carnegie Corporation about how to implement the grant; and the impact of the national context in a particular site.

- **Site-Specific Facilitating Factors.** Nearly half of the state sites reported that the timing of the initiative was essential because it enabled them to move their already-established early childhood agendas to new levels. Several sites with strong gubernatorial or

mayoral support said this proved to be a crucial supportive factor. Almost half of the sites viewed the strong national economy as a facilitating factor. It added money to the state coffers, which, in turn, increased the government's willingness to bolster resources targeting young children. Even so, the added resources comprised only a small proportion of what was needed, and some sites expressed concern about the difficulty of reaching their goals. Several sites noted that the existence of a stable leadership group and solid working relationships helped jump-start this initiative. However, working together on a common agenda moved both long-standing and newer relationships to new levels of collaboration.

- **Initiative-Specific Facilitating Factors.** Virtually all the sites reported that being involved with the Carnegie Corporation through a Starting Points grant was a highly facilitating factor. It not only enhanced the image of those receiving the grant, but it opened both policy and funding doors in unexpected ways. The sites also appreciated the fact that not only were the funds flexible, but the corporation permitted the sites to change course when things were not working. (Sometimes these midcourse corrections were relatively small, but in two or three instances they marked a very significant regrouping that was beneficial in the end.) There was also appreciation for the continuous learning culture that the Carnegie Corporation established, particularly the emphasis on peer-to-peer learning. The external buzz about early childhood development as a policy issue—and particularly the focus on early brain development that the corporation helped build—provided a context of unexpected opportunity that was then seized upon and used strategically by all the sites.

- **Site-Specific Factors Posing Challenges.** The sites also reported a number of shared challenges, primarily related to the difficulties of envisioning, implementing, and sustaining change. These challenges, a few of which were initiative-specific, included: the difficulty of garnering support for legislation, sustaining legislative interest in an area once major legislation has been enacted, keeping the early childhood agenda in the forefront, and ensuring the agenda is broadly bipartisan. Sites also spoke of the challenges of keeping multiple early childhood initiatives (often with multiple funders) "aligned" in a way consistent with the core state or city vision and of developing the capacity to track impacts and outcomes.

IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES

Learning from Starting Points examines two types of accomplishments: observable changes and process changes.

Observable changes include:

- Substantial legislative and policy gains.
- Significantly increased public and private resources, especially for child care.
- Expanded networks of services and new service models.
- Expanded advocacy for young children at both the city and state level in some sites.
- Strengthened state (and now national) capacity for training and technical assistance on the implementation of comprehensive early childhood initiatives.
- New partnership with the business community in selected sites.
- Expanded family support programs and deepened attention to child care quality issues.
- More focused leadership development strategies for parents.
- New models for media and public awareness campaigns and the use of strategic communication approaches on behalf of the early childhood agenda.
- Dissemination of tools to track and promote quality improvement in early childhood settings.
- New forums—coalitions, councils, and organizations—to drive the next set of activities across the sites.
- Deepened leadership capacity for early childhood issues across the sites.

Process changes include:

- New relationships among leaders.
- Conceptual reorganization.
- New ways of working together.
- New respect for the importance of technical assistance and networking to sustain a vision and to promote effective implementation of new policies and practice approaches.

These changes hold, if sustained, the promise of setting the stage for the development of a much more coherent advocacy and policy agenda on behalf of young children and families.

Strengthening of leadership may have the most powerful, if not measurable, impact of the Starting Points initiative.

KEY LESSONS FOR FUNDERS AND POLICYMAKERS

Based primarily on the insights of the Starting Points site directors, 10 lessons have significant implications for the next generation of multisite early childhood systems change efforts. These lessons center on the culture of foundation initiatives regarding resources, relationships, and expectations.

1) Relatively limited foundation dollars, used strategically, can be a catalyst for large-scale system change.

2) Flexible funding, when coupled with clear and "big goals," enables grantees to be strategically opportunistic, to take smart risks, and to respond to unexpected challenges.

3) The Starting Points experience suggests that using the foundation grant deliberately to leverage access to new resources or to facilitate the better use of existing resources is a powerful way to influence a local context.

4) Using foundation resources to help change the larger policy context within which sites work, or at least situating the expectations in the larger policy context while giving support to sites, can provide a kind of "cover" and legitimacy to the sites that can enhance their success.

5) Allowing grantees to invest in relationships, especially at the beginning of a grant period, without expecting immediate and concrete results can have a long term pay-off.

6) Promoting cross-site knowledge transfer, leadership development, and a learning culture throughout the course of a multisite initiative can help to sustain the gains of the initiative.

7) Having mechanisms in place to link grantees with timely, flexible peer and expert technical assistance can make a difference, particularly in emerging strategic areas such as communication and outcome design and management.

8) Planned, periodic opportunities for strategic reflection and testing of assumptions, goals, and pathways can strengthen the impact of the foundation's support at the local level and achievements at all sites.

9) Funders should be willing to help the sites use their money both to meet the foundation purposes but also to craft or further a vision for sustained change at the site. Such a philanthropic devolution approach is highly valued by grantees.

10) Setting clear expectations early on (or at least a process for arriving at them and how the efforts will be evaluated) and defining success are both important to grantees. The time frame for initiatives should be commensurate with the size of the goals and with the level of change that is contemplated.

CONCLUSION

Systems change is a complex, iterative process. Leadership is key, relationships count, and data, increasingly, are central. Starting Points was the catalyst for concentrated networking and activities in 11 sites that had, by the end, largely changed the threshold level of expectation, communication, vision, policy, and/or practice regarding important aspects of the well-being of young children. In the process, the initiative deepened the capacity of a cadre of leaders who, in turn, now view themselves as conscious and deliberate change agents. This strengthening of leadership may have the most powerful, if not measurable, impact.

The "quiet crisis" described in the original Starting Points report is far from over. But the Starting Points initiative has provided many lessons for the future about how to continue the momentum that it and other recent efforts have generated on behalf of the youngest children and families. It is hoped that these lessons will powerfully inform the next generation of efforts to improve outcomes on its behalf.

Introduction

In 1994, the Carnegie Corporation of New York issued a report titled *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children*.[4] Its findings painted a disturbing picture of America's youngest children. The very first paragraph stated:

> *Compared with most other industrialized countries, the United States has a higher infant mortality rate, a higher proportion of low-birthweight babies, [and] a smaller proportion of babies immunized against child diseases.... [Moreover] of the twelve million children under the age of three, a staggering number are affected by one or more risk factors that undermine healthy development. One in four lives in poverty. One in four lives in a single-parent family. One in three victims of physical abuse is a baby under age one (p. xiii).*

Calling its findings "a quiet crisis," the report urged the federal government, states, community leaders, educators, health care decision makers, service providers, business leaders, parents, and the philanthropic community to actively work to achieve four broad goals: (1) promoting responsible parenthood; (2) guaranteeing child care choices; (3) ensuring good health and protection; and (4) mobilizing communities to support young children and their families. Heeding its own call, the following year the Carnegie Corporation launched the Starting Points initiative, a national effort to create a policy and practice agenda on behalf of young children. In January 1996, the Carnegie Corporation awarded 14 grants to 16 sites for Phase I, which lasted two years. An invitation to submit a proposal for a continuation grant for Phase II resulted in 11 awards, four to cities and seven to states. In 1999, the corporation asked the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) to undertake the Starting Points Assessment Project, a descriptive assessment of the initiative.[5]

This report documents the findings of the Starting Points Assessment Project. It is not a traditional evaluation. It includes neither a comparison of numbers of children served across the sites nor a ranking of the accomplishments at the sites, since the initiative was crafted too broadly and the sites were too varied for such an evaluation to be meaningful. What it does do is provide a systematic analysis, highlighting commonalities and variation across the sites in terms of structure and auspices, core strategies and activities, and both observable and process-related outcomes. Also, drawing heavily on the insights of the site directors, it offers a perspective on the lessons, issues, and challenges of mounting such an ambitious and flexible systems-change effort. It is intended to be useful to foundation officials and others charged with designing the next generation of multisite comprehensive initiatives as well as those policymakers, providers, advocates, and families involved in their implementation.

HOW THE REPORT IS ORGANIZED

The report is organized in three sections. The first section is an overview of the role of the Carnegie Corporation in the Starting Points initiative. It provides a glimpse into the thinking that guided the design of the initiative as well as an overview of its implementation, sets the stage for the cross-site analysis by providing brief descriptions of the major activities carried out at each site, and describes the assessment project itself. (More formal profiles of the sites that have been reviewed and approved by the site leaders may be found on the NCCP Web site: www.nccp.org.)[6] The second section is the cross-site analysis, which offers a systematic overview of the variation among the sites regarding the political and policy context, the implementation approaches, the site-specific and initiative-specific mediators that influenced what happened at the sites, and the impacts and outcomes. The third section distills the key lessons of the initiative and highlights their implications for future public and private funders.

SECTION 1

The Starting Points Initiative: An Overview

This section provides an overview of the Starting Points initiative from a national perspective. It highlights the evolution and structure of the grant program established by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. It offers, in alphabetical order, a capsule view of each of the sites, and it describes the Starting Points Assessment Project methodology.

THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STARTING POINTS INITIATIVE: THE VIEW FROM THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK

The Design Strategy

The Starting Points initiative, was, as noted above, the Carnegie Corporation's response to its own report. It was intended to be a catalyst for building the political will, leadership, and policy and program improvements necessary to begin to address the "quiet crisis." The design called for both a site-specific funding strategy and a complimentary national strategy to promote interest in early childhood and support a network of national organizations to carry out activities related to the Starting Points initiative.

The Implementation Approach

What was formally known as the "Starting Points States and Communities Partnership for Young Children Grants Initiative" began in 1995. Governors and mayors in 16 states and 12 cities were invited to submit proposals to the Corporation. These sites had been identified by key informants as having the potential to use foundation funds effectively, which meant having both a strong enough track record in the early childhood field to mount a comprehensive reform effort and substantial policy, professional, and philanthropic support. The Starting Points Assessment Project focuses on the 11 sites of the original 14 that participated in both Phase I and Phase II. These included four cities: Baltimore, Boston, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco; and seven states: Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia. Over the four and one-half years of the initiative, the sites received more than $87 million.

The initial request for proposals was quite broad. It asked applicants to provide a background/needs statement and to describe proposed work that would lead to demonstrated progress in mobilizing stakeholders, strengthening public and private sector policies, improving the quality of programs, and encouraging continuous learning and development. The Phase II request for a continuation proposal called upon the applicants to define outcomes more clearly. Specifically, in the Phase II continuation proposal, the corporation asked the sites to "establish and meet measurable, concrete outcomes based on systematic strategic plans that concentrate on program and policy development, [and address] the evaluation and dissemination of model approaches on a citywide or statewide basis."

Consistent with the initial design, there were two other major components to the initiative. The first involved the participation of a network of national intermediary organizations, while the second called for support for a series of national initiatives intended to keep the spotlight on the importance of investing in early childhood.

- **The National Intermediary Network.** In order to promote continuous learning and development for the initiative as a whole, at the beginning of the project the Carnegie Corporation convened a network of national organizations that it supported throughout the effort. This group, which became known as the Learning, Knowledge, and Development (LKD) group, met periodically to discuss the initiative, related research, and other relevant activities. The LKD group was also instrumental in developing a series of reports and issue briefs highlighting program models and strategies that emerged from the initiative.[7] Organizations that participated throughout included the Families and Work Institute, the National Center for Children in Poverty, and The Finance Project, which became the program management office during Phase II. The National Governors' Association (NGA), the Harvard

The Starting Points initiative aimed to promote systems change through program improvement, policy development, and public engagement and awareness.

Family Research Project, George Washington University, and Susan Philliber Associates were also involved, though in a more limited way.

- **National Starting Points Activities.** Throughout the life of the initiative, the Carnegie Corporation sought to build momentum for a focus on the earliest years by providing strategic support whenever there seemed to be significant opportunities to engage influential national leaders and the broader public in dialogue about emerging research and challenges. This strategic attention to national activities was intended to provide a context of support for the activities at the sites, as well as to promote more national action on behalf of young children. To that end, the Corporation supported both the NGA and the National Council of State Legislatures to promote early childhood issues. The NGA, for example, developed a special briefing for the governors on early brain development as well as a recognition program to honor governors making special efforts on behalf of young children. Another set of activities involved the development of "I Am Your Child," a national public awareness and promotional campaign. Launched on national television, the program led to the development of public service announcements as well as local campaigns using the same themes. At about the same time, a widely distributed special edition of *Newsweek* that focused on brain development in children helped generate attention to young children. (A second edition followed two years later.) A third set of activities involved coordination with the Clinton Administration for the White House Conference on Early Development and Child Care.

STARTING POINTS IN ACTION: THE VIEW FROM THE SITES

The Starting Points initiative aimed to promote systems change through program improvement, policy development, and public engagement and awareness. Within the parameters of the four broad goals set forth in the original Starting Points report—to promote responsible parenthood, to guarantee quality child care choices, to ensure good health and protection, and to mobilize communities to support young children and their families—the sites had significant freedom to decide what to do. To provide a context for the subsequent cross-site analysis, the site summaries below aim to capture the essence of each site's effort.

BALTIMORE

The Baltimore Starting Points program—known as Starting Points/Healthy Start—was originally under the auspices of the Baltimore Department of Public Health but is now an independent agency called Baltimore City Healthy Start, Inc. The program initially focused on redesigning and expanding a health-focused home visiting program in two distressed neighborhoods in Baltimore. It expanded programs to serve young children from ages birth to three and their families (not just infants) and to incorporate an early childhood development component. In Phase II, Starting Points joined with a team to implement a 10-year citywide initiative called the Safe and Sound Campaign, which is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Healthy Start and the Safe and Sound team are now working together to implement the expanded model of Healthy Start in several more high-risk communities and have received additional support from the state. In addition, Starting Points, by invitation, took the lead in implementing a citywide early literacy effort called Reach Out and Read. It also developed an Early Learning program that enabled it to successfully apply for an Early Head Start grant.

BOSTON

The Boston Starting Points project, known as Connecting the Dots for Boston Tots, aimed to integrate the many different efforts within the city that were designed to support and strengthen families with young children. A direct service program called the Family Nurturing Center led the effort. Collaborating partners included the mayor's office, Parents United for Child Care, Health Care for All, the Boston Medical Center, Dorchester Cares, and the Boston Children's Museum. Collectively, the partners worked toward legislative and other policy improvements in child care, home visiting, and health coverage for children. In addition, Starting Points developed and piloted Circles of Caring, a comprehen-

sive approach to family support to be used in the poorest neighborhoods. (As yet, however, there are no plans for the expansion of Circles of Caring to other neighborhoods.) In conjunction with parent leaders and organizational partners, Dots also developed and implemented a successful parental leadership training strategy. Although the formal Dots partnership will not continue, the participants believe it set the stage for closer working relationships among Boston's advocacy and provider communities.

COLORADO

The Colorado Starting Points, known as Bright Beginnings, is the only site that focused exclusively on infants and toddlers. It was also the only site that did not directly involve a public-private partnership, at least during Phase II.[8] The emphasis was on designing and refining a strategy known as Warm Welcome, a program that involves visiting new parents either in their homes or in community settings. During Phase I of the grant, a network of regional affiliates across the state was set up to recruit and train volunteers to perform these visits. During Phase II, the program model was redesigned to strengthen the focus on language development while adding second and third year activities. The site has also tried to foster closer links with other home visiting agencies and is now tailoring its approach to specific populations, including the Latino community and mothers receiving cash assistance. Just as it is now expected that children riding in cars be secured in child car safety seats, Bright Beginning aims to foster a community expectation that all children will have appropriate language stimulation during their earliest years. At the time Phase II ended, the program was funded entirely by private sources and was working on strategies for longer-term financing.

FLORIDA

The Florida Starting Points initiative focused on public education, training to promote awareness of the importance of children's earliest years, and policy initiatives to increase resources for child care and to improve practice among early childhood providers. The public education strategies centered around the training of both policymakers and practitioners on the implications of recent neuroscience findings about early brain development. The policy initiatives involved the development of a Child Care Executive Partnership Program that, with leadership from the business community, continues to play an important role in efforts to increase public and private resources for child care. The site also carried out a successful legislative advocacy strategy to promote quality child care, increase relevant state resources, and enact major school readiness legislation. In addition, new efforts were made to gather data and information about Florida's youngest children on a county by county basis. In Phase II, the initiative involved a partnership among the Center for Florida's Children, the Florida Children's Forum, the Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies, and the University of South Florida.

HAWAII

The Hawaii Starting Points, known as Good Beginnings, evolved into a two-tiered effort, with one set of strategies focused at the community level, the other at the state level. The community-focused strategies included developing "Play and Learn" groups as a means to share child development information with families and to engage parents as potential community leaders. The policy-focused strategies included engaging in processes to build consensus about, and benchmarks for, the newly enacted state goals that "all Hawaii's children will be safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in school." During Phase II, the Hawaii Starting Points was led by the Good Beginnings Alliance, a statewide organization linked to business, philanthropic, and government sectors. When the initiative ended, Good Beginnings had received support from other national foundations, as well as from the Hawaii legislature, and was implementing a federal demonstration program to help transform the state culture into an outcome-driven approach.

NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina's Starting Points focused on strengthening the technical assistance capacity to support Smart Start, a broad systems change and program enhancement initiative with the goal of ensuring that every child enters school healthy and ready to succeed. Through Smart Start, which began in 1993 as a gubernatorial initiative, funds are allocated to local community partnerships. These partnerships include representatives from local government, the service provider community, the business and faith-based communities, and family members. The funds are intended primarily for child care, but a portion may be used for health and family support-related activities. The statewide public-private partnership charged with overseeing Smart Start is also responsible for building local community capacity to manage, sustain, and grow the initiative in ways that will benefit young children and families. Prior to the Starting Points initiative, strategies to carry out this responsibility were minimal. Start-

ing Points enabled the Smart Start leadership to design and implement a strategic plan for delivering technical assistance, documenting best practices, and developing performance-monitoring tools for each of the core elements of Smart Start: health care, family support, child care, and community planning. Over the course of the initiative requests for technical assistance from outside North Carolina became so frequent that at the end of Phase II the partnership developed a national technical assistance center with support from the Carnegie Corporation and other foundations.

PITTSBURGH

The Pittsburgh Starting Points focused on sustaining and expanding effective prevention strategies (with special attention to family support, health, and early literacy) in the face of a changing political climate. Throughout, a core strategy has involved building coalitions and partnerships to effect change in policy and practice. In the course of the initiative, Pittsburgh's Starting Points worked with, initiated and/or staffed, and helped to sustain partnerships with Community Voices, a parent advocacy organization; the Family Support Policy Board, which led the effort to increase county funding for family support; the Early Literacy Campaign; the Consumer Health Coalition, which spearheaded a successful effort to increase enrollment in the state's children's health program; and the Youth Crime Prevention Council. Starting Points has also developed and disseminated special issue briefs six times a year to more than 850 state and local policymakers. With support from the Heinz Endowments and other local funders, Starting Points is continuing to function under the auspices of the Office of Child Development at the University of Pittsburgh.

RHODE ISLAND

The Rhode Island Starting Points combined a public engagement strategy—involving the development and dissemination of fact books, issues briefs, special briefing events, and a monthly cable television show—with policy initiatives. The primary policy focus has been legislative, involving successful efforts to enact, implement, and monitor major child care legislation known as Starting RIte. This legislation expanded child care and modeled the strategic use of targeted federal dollars to achieve state goals. Rhode Island has also provided leadership to bolster efforts to implement RIte Care, comprehensive child health care legislation that predated Starting Points. As part of the effort to improve support services to young children, especially low-income children, the state increased funds for comprehensive services for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers as well. During Phase II, the Rhode Island Starting Points was led by RIKids Count, a multi-issue, data-driven advocacy organization that had not previously focused on young children. RIKids Count became the focal point for a strong informal partnership involving both governmental and nongovernmental agencies including the state's Children's Cabinet, a local foundation, and a United Way chapter. This working partnership is expected to continue, as is the focus on advocacy for young children in RIKids Count.

SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco Starting Points created a leadership body, the Early Childhood Interagency Council (ECIC), to coordinate citywide planning, financing, training, and public education efforts on behalf of young children and their families. Using a consensus process to set priorities, the ECIC has focused on augmenting resources; improving the quality of child care; increasing access to mental health services for young children, their families, and other caregivers; and conducting fiscal analyses. Although housed in the mayor's office, the ECIC represents a diverse group of community leaders that includes service providers, funders, and families. The work of the ECIC and Starting Points has led to substantial growth in the allocation of city dollars for young children as well as the development of a child care facilities fund. At the time Phase II ended, it was not clear whether the ECIC would be merged with the newly created county Commission on Children and Families that resulted from the passage of Proposition 10[9] or whether it would continue as its own entity.

VERMONT

With steady support from its governor, Vermont has been engaged in a multi-year effort that predates Starting Points to track and improve outcomes for its citizens. Starting Points enabled the state to focus more concerted attention on building a community-state partnership to improve policies and sustain the gains for young children. The state used the Starting Points resources to seed efforts that otherwise could not have been funded. These included the creation of networks of family child care providers across the state; the strengthening of Early Childhood Councils regionally; the establishment of a broad-based process to develop core performance standards across all early childhood settings; the partnering with a local foundation to work with the business community; and the creation of the Vermont Child Care Fund, a revolving loan plan. Most of these initiatives are now being supported by the state.

WEST VIRGINIA

Under the auspices of the Governor's Cabinet on Children, West Virginia's Starting Points enabled the state to deepen its policy and service investments on behalf of young children. Efforts to focus attention on young children in West Virginia began prior to Starting Points and have been sustained by two governors. The state used the Starting Points initiative to pilot local Starting Points centers, taking advantage of the preexisting Family Resource Networks to provide local planning and coordination. The success of these centers in providing a range of supports to families with young children in turn led the state to commit public dollars to expand the number of centers from seven to 18. State-level leaders also worked to increase public awareness about early childhood, provide information on best practices within the state, and develop criteria and self assessment tools to improve the quality and efficacy of the Starting Points centers and early childhood programs.

The mix of approaches and leadership across the sites, as these descriptions suggest, was considerable. The next section highlights the methodology used to examine this variation more systematically.

THE STARTING POINTS ASSESSMENT PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to carry out the Starting Points Assessment Project involved three core strategies: reviews of written materials, interviews and debriefing of key informants, and analysis of the data. Specifically, the National Center for Children in Poverty:

- Reviewed all relevant written materials, including memos prepared by the Carnegie Corporation, meeting agendas of the network of national organizations, and materials prepared by the sites such as progress reports, formal publications, and logic models.[10]
- Debriefed the Carnegie Corporation staff and others who participated in site visits about their impressions of the site's strengths, accomplishments, and challenges (the NCCP team did not make any individual site visits for the assessment).[11]
- Developed a framework to guide the cross-site analysis, drawing on the implicit theory of change embedded in the design of the Starting Points initiative, an overall logic model developed by the Learning, Knowledge, and Development group, and site-specific logic models developed with the sites at the beginning of Phase II.[12]
- Synthesized site-specific information into profiles that were reviewed by the sites for accuracy (see <http://www.nccp.org> for the profiles).
- Designed a plan to ensure the participation of the site directors in the assessment by permitting them to use their responses to the NCCP questions in lieu of a site-generated final narrative report to Carnegie Corporation. (The sites retained full responsibility for the fiscal reports.)
- Conducted in-depth phone interviews with the site directors close to the end of the funding period based on a protocol developed by NCCP with input from the directors and the LKD group (see Appendix A). With the permission of the respondents, the phone conversations were taped, summarized, and sent to the site directors for corrections and comments. To ensure that the site directors felt free to talk openly about the challenges they had faced and their overall experience as participants in a national initiative, NCCP agreed not to present any data from the interviews in site-specific ways.

Based on this information, NCCP then carried out a systematic analysis that formed the basis for this report. The next section presents the framework for the analysis as well as the findings.

SECTION 2

The Cross-Site Analysis

The Starting Points initiative was an ambitious experiment in social systems change. The aim was to serve as a catalyst to states and communities in order to seed activities that would spur both short and long-term change. The initiative, especially in Phase I, set very few requirements for the grantees. The Carnegie Corporation was essentially hoping to start a positive snowball effect at each site, anticipating that on the grantees to design approaches that fit best with each site's particular culture, early childhood leadership, and political realities. The result was an enormous amount of variation across the sites that is reflected in the brief descriptions in the last section.

The aim of this assessment is to capture the variety across the sites while highlighting the common themes, accomplishments, and challenges that the initiative spawned. Specifically, it focuses on four core questions:

- What was the variation in the structure, auspices, and leadership across the sites?
- How did the demographic, policy, economic, and political contexts vary across the sites?
- What was the range of activities and accomplishments across the sites?
- What were the most common positive and negative mediating factors across the sites?

THE ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

To capture the complex interactions among different aspects of the initiative both within individual sites and across the sites collectively, NCCP developed a conceptual model of the key factors that influenced the outcomes (see Figure 1). The model focuses on the interaction among three basic dimensions: contextual factors, implementation factors, and mediating factors that together influence impacts and outcomes at each site and permit reflections about the overall initiative. Contextual factors include the national early childhood policy context; the child and family policy and political culture at both the state and the city level; and the site-specific organizational structure. Implementation factors include the site-specific foci (e.g. early care and education, family support, and child health); site-specific strategies; and the specific activities carried out to implement the strategies. Mediating factors define conditions at the sites or relate to the larger initiative that influenced site-specific implementation, impacts, and outcomes. These factors include such things as: strong or weak gubernatorial or mayoral support; the availability of additional resources; or the impact of the knowledge-building culture that the Carnegie Corporation seeded. Two types of impacts and outcomes are defined: observable changes in programs, policies, and resources; and process changes in systems integration, in leadership capacity, and in new partnerships that are designed to promote an early childhood agenda.

In addition, the analysis also addresses two other very important questions:

- How did the sites perceive the strengths and limitations of the Starting Points initiative?
- What are the collective lessons and implications for future multisite early childhood systems change initiatives?

The data to answer the last two questions are drawn largely from the interviews with the site directors and are reflected in Section 3.

THE FINDINGS

Contextual Factors

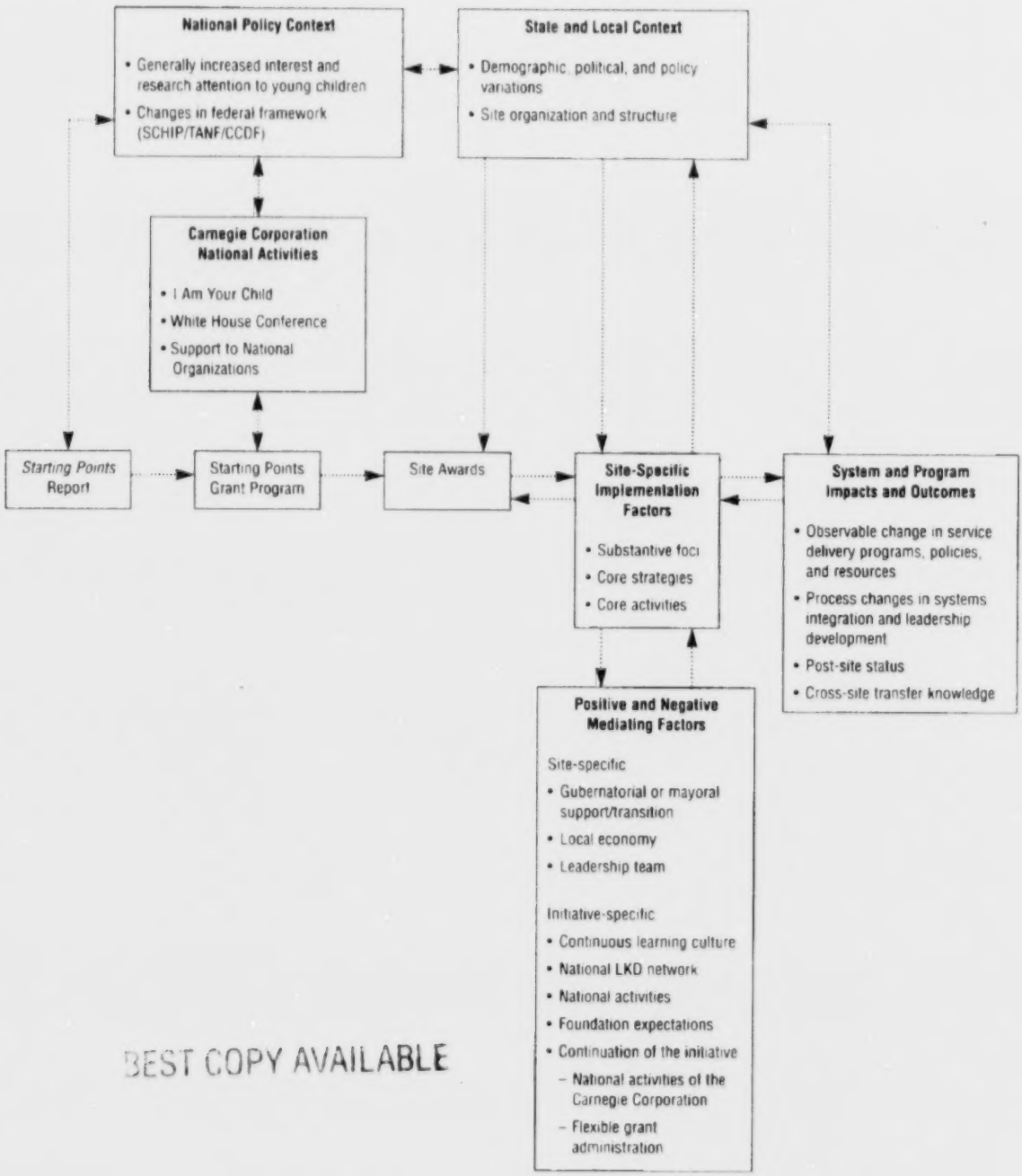
For the Starting Points initiative, the national context, the state and local context, and the structure of site organization and leadership were all important framing factors.

The National Context

The four and one-half years of the Starting Points initiative were marked nationally by an increase in attention to young children and their families. As noted in the introduction, the Carnegie Corporation stimulated a good deal of this attention. Activities supported or encouraged by the corporation included:

For the Starting Points initiative, the national context, the state and local context, and the structure of site organization and leadership were all important framing factors.

Figure 1: A Framework for the Starting Points Assessment Project


National Policy Context
• Generally increased interest and research attention to young children
• Changes in federal framework (SCHIP/TANF/CCDF)
State and Local Context
• Demographic, political, and policy variations
• Site organization and structure
Carnegie Corporation National Activities
• I Am Your Child
• White House Conference
• Support to National Organizations
Starting Points Report
Starting Points Grant Program
Site Awards
Site-Specific Implementation Factors
• Substantive foci
• Core strategies
• Core activities
System and Program Impacts and Outcomes
• Observable change in service delivery programs, policies, and resources
• Process changes in systems integration and leadership development
• Post-site status
• Cross-site transfer knowledge
Positive and Negative Mediating Factors
Site-specific
• Gubernatorial or mayoral support/transition
• Local economy
• Leadership team
Initiative-specific
• Continuous learning culture
• National LKD network
• National activities
• Foundation expectations
• Continuation of the initiative
– National activities of the Carnegie Corporation
– Flexible grant administration

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- The I Am Your Child public awareness campaign.
- Support to national policymaking organizations, in particular the National Governors' Association and the National Conference of State Legislators.
- Successful efforts to engage the White House in a high-level dialogue about the meaning of research findings on early brain development.
- Support for national activities not directly related to Starting Points, such as NCCP's biannual analysis of state policymaking efforts on behalf of young children and families, *Map and Track: State Initiatives for Young Children and Families*.[13]

Changes in federal policies for children and families during the course of the Starting Points initiative were also significant. These included:

- The transformation of America's welfare program from Aid to Families with Dependent Children into the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant, which has stringent work requirements for all families but gives the states considerable flexibility in how they spend their resources.
- The enactment of the state Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP), providing $4 billion to the states over a 10-year period to expand health insurance for children not eligible for Medicaid.
- The targeting of increased federal resources for a child care subsidy program called the Child Care and Development Fund (these resources almost doubled during the time period).
- The increased attention on the Educate America Act, whose first goal states that all children shall enter school ready to learn.

Finally, it should also be noted that during this time period state-level activity on behalf of young children and their families increased significantly. During the course of the Starting Points initiative, for example, three editions of the NCCP report, *Map and Track: State Initiatives for Young Children and Families*, were released.

- In 1996, 18 states were investing in family support and child development programs for infants and toddlers; today, that number is 31. State investment in programs for preschoolers has increased significantly.
- There has also been a significant increase over time in the total investments reported by the states in young children and families. Thus, between 1998 and 2000, state investment increased by 90 percent.

Together, these editions show a clear trend toward increased state investments in young children and families during a time period of unprecedented national economic growth. However, it is unclear if resources would have been allocated to this particular priority without the national attention young children were receiving.

The State Context

Three aspects of the state and local contexts across the Starting Points sites are particularly relevant in understanding the evolution and experiences of the Starting Points initiative: the demographic context within each site; the policy and political culture; and the structure, partners, and leadership teams that carried out the Starting Points work.

The Demographic Context

There is significant variation in key demographic indicators in the 11 Starting Points states[14] (see Figure 2 for selected information and Appendix B for more details). For example, in seven of the state-level sites:

- The population of children under age six varies from 49,000 children in Vermont to 1.1 million children in Florida. Four of the states have 110,000 children or less, while three have between 300,000 and 600,000.
- The percentage of young children in families with incomes at or under 200 percent of the poverty level varies from a low of 37 percent in Colorado to a high of 50 percent in Florida. (The national average is 41 percent.)[15] At 200 percent of the poverty level, the income for a family of three is $28,000, for a family of four, $34,000.
- The state median income for families with young children varies from a low of $22,000 in West Virginia to a high of $43,000 in Colorado.

The Policy Context

Two dimensions of state policy are particularly relevant: the level of the state's efforts to help low-income supporting families increase their economic security and make available high quality child development and family support programs. Data from the 2000 edition of *Map and Track* show considerable variation in state efforts to promote family economic security (see Figure 2):

- Seven Starting Points states (and 15 others) relieve families of income tax burdens if they are living at or below the poverty level. One Starting Points site, Florida, has no income tax, while three impose a tax burden even on poor families.

Figure 2: A Comparison of Key Demographic and Policy Indicators Across the Sites

	Number of children 0–6	% of young children below 200% of the federal poverty level	% of low-income young children whose parents* are employed full- or part-time	Estimated % of children eligible for CCDF served	Maximum Medicaid/ Children's Insurance Program (CHIP) eligibility levels (0–6)**	Parent eligibility level for Medicaid as % of federal poverty level
California	3,288,388	52.2%	40.0%	13.0%	250%	157%
Colorado	316,351	36.6%	56.0%	11.0%	185%	45%
Florida	1,132,908	50.1%	52.9%	8.0%	200%	71%
Hawaii	100,451	41.6%	56.6%	9.0%	185%** 133%**	115%
Maryland	467,056	31.2%	47.7%	8.0%	200%	46%
Massachusetts	512,515	32.4%	44.3%	13.0%	200%	133%
North Carolina	588,322	44.6%	63.0%	16.0%	200%	56%
Pennsylvania	950,528	39.9%	50.4%	15.0%	235%	71%
Rhode Island	68,517	40.7%	54.6%	15.0%	250%	193%
Vermont	49,382	41.2%	65.3%	15.0%	300%	158%
West Virginia	110,974	64.6%	39.9%	25.0%	150%	30%

* This refers to the percentage of children living either in single-parent families with one parent employed (full- or part-time) or in two-parent families with both parents employed full or part-time.

** Sources: Gauthier, N. K., Knitzer, J., & Ripple, C. (2000). *Map and track: State initiatives for young children and families.* New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University. Also see the profiles of the Starting Points sites on the NCCP Web site at www.nccp.org.

- Two Starting Points states provide a refundable child care credit to families, and four supplement the federal earned income tax credit with a refundable state credit. (Nationally, only six other states offer refundable child care credits, while six others offer refundable state earned income credits.)
- The estimated percentage of children eligible for subsidies through the Child Care and Development Fund ranged from a low of 8 percent in Florida to a high of 25 percent in West Virginia. Nationally, approximately 12 percent of all children potentially eligible for child care subsidies are served.[16]
- Four of the Starting Points states (along with 16 others) provide health insurance to children in families earning up to 200 percent of the poverty level through the Medicaid/CHIP program. Three of the states (along with 10 others) provide health insurance to children in families earning more than 200 percent of the poverty level through the Medicaid/CHIP program. In the remaining sites, only children in families earning less than 200 percent of the poverty level are eligible. Parental eligibility for health insurance through Medicaid varies dramatically across the sites. For instance, parents in West Virginia are eligible only if they earn no more than 30 percent of the poverty level, while in Vermont they can earn more than 150 percent of the poverty level and still be eligible.
- Four of the sites—Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina and West Virginia—supplement WIC. (Nationally, an additional six states make this choice).

Just as the state policy choices in implementing federal programs vary, so, too, do state choices across the sites in expending resources for child development and family support programs.

- Five of the Starting Points states supplement Head Start with their own funds, although none supplement Early Head Start. (Nationally, 17 other states supplement Head Start and six states supplement Early Head Start.)
- Nine of the Starting Points states invest state dollars in programs for infants and toddlers. Two, Colorado and Pennsylvania, do not. (Nationally, 31 states invest in these programs.)
- Ten of the Starting Points states invest in state prekindergarten programs. Pennsylvania does not. (Nationally, 43 states invest in state prekindergarten programs.)
- Based on the number of children under the age of six in each state, California, Massachusetts, and North Carolina invest more than $200 per young child in child development and family support programs (excluding child care); Florida and Rhode Island invest between $100 and $200 per young

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child; while the remaining Starting Points states invest between $20 and $100. Nationally, six states invest $200 or more per young child, 14 states invest between $100 and $200, and 16 states invest between $20 and $100. The remaining states invest less than $20 per young child, if anything.[17]

- The states also varied in whether they substantially increased investments in programs for young children over the Starting Points time period. With respect to funding programs for preschoolers, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, and North Carolina showed the largest increases. With respect to infants and toddlers, the most significant increases were in California, Florida, and Massachusetts. In the remaining Starting Points states, programs for infants and toddlers were funded at essentially the same amount during the initiative's four years.[18]

The Political Context

When the Starting Points initiative began, six of the seven state-level sites had governors (representing both parties) who considered the improvement of policies and practices for young children as one of their priorities. Three of these governors remained in office throughout the initiative, while in the other three sites gubernatorial leadership changed, and sometimes the governing political party as well. At the local-level sites, only one sustained a major transition in leadership during the course of the initiative.

The Starting Points Site Context

Variations in two aspects of the site context are highlighted: the locus and structure of site leadership, and the funding levels and use of funds.

The Locus and Structure of Site Leadership. For the state-level sites, leadership came from within government (four states in Phase I, two states in Phase II); advocates (one state in Phase I, three states in Phase II); a statewide public-private partnership (one state); and a private organization created in response to the initiative (one state). Among the city-level sites, leadership also varied, coming from within a university (albeit staffed by a former county official), a medical center that shifted to a community service agency in Phase II; a mayor's office; and, for the fourth city, a city department of public health during Phase I and a newly created nonprofit entity in Phase II.

Funding Levels and Use of Funds. Over the four years of the Starting Points initiative, the Carnegie Corporation contributed approximately $7 million, $3.5 million in each phase. For each site, the grants ranged from $375,000 to $600,000 over both phases, with three sites receiving between $500,000 and $600,000. While the sites were required to match these dollars one-to-one, a number were able to match the Carnegie Corporation funds at an even higher rate, often with help from local foundations. Some sites also received small technical assistance mini-grants from the Carnegie Corporation, enabling them to bring particular consultants to their states.

Almost all of the sites used Carnegie Corporation funds to support both staff and special projects. (One site used them just for special projects and one just for staff.) The special projects, however, were very carefully chosen. For example:

- Funds were used, particularly by state-level sites, to support the design and publication of attractive, compelling materials for which public funds could not be used. This enabled the site directors to address an otherwise difficult challenge. From a government perspective, materials published with public funds should cost as little as possible so as not to waste taxpayer dollars. Yet from a communications perspective, attractive materials are critical to developing an effective strategy that in turn can help build the political will to promote better policies and action on behalf of children.
- Funds were used to support activities that are important in building relationships and promoting networking among key groups but are often difficult to fund, especially from public sources. For instance, one site used the funds to pay for a retreat for legislators to discuss early childhood issues. Another used funds to seed a statewide advocacy group. Several sites supported statewide conferences or activities related to child development and brain research.
- Four sites used Starting Points funds to pilot new service approaches. Several sites used funds to develop approaches to integrated services or to focus attention on the needs of the youngest children in the context of existing service delivery models.

The contextual factors highlighted here: the larger national environment that was favorable to early childhood initiatives; the state demographic, policy, and political contexts; and the site-specific leadership structure and auspices provide the grounding for how the sites implemented the initiative.

Implementation Factors

This section highlights four implementation factors and defines the critical choices that the sites made with respect to each of them. The factors include leadership patterns, substantive foci, target populations, and the core strategies and activities that evolved.

The Leadership Patterns

The leadership mix across the sites varied in three core ways: the stability of the leadership, whether or not the leadership came from those with more experience in services or those with more experience in policy, and the extent to which the site leadership involved partnerships with others or was centered in a small group of decisionmakers.

- While most sites had relatively stable leadership across Phases I and II, in three sites leadership changes had significant implications for how the initiative evolved. In all instances, the change in leadership involved a redesign of the initiative in midstream in ways that promoted rapid and positive change.
- About three-fourths of the sites had leaders with policy connections either rooted in advocacy or government or sometimes both. In about a quarter of the sites, the leaders had service backgrounds. Not surprisingly, the primary focus in these sites was improvement or expansion of program design, although by the end of the initiative some were able to demonstrate broader impacts. Proportionally, leadership from those with service experience was more likely at the city-level sites than at the state level.
- In more than half the sites, leadership was centered in one or two individuals who worked collaboratively with a broad range of stakeholders, but who basically steered the course of the initiative. The other sites reflected shared leadership involving partnerships either among advocates or service providers or governmental and nongovernmental teams working together.

The Substantive Foci

Early care and education, family support, and child health were the substantive areas of focus, in that order of priority, at the Starting Points sites.

- Most substantive efforts centered around child care, involving seven sites (six states and one city). Five sites, two states and three cities, focused on strengthening family support through home visiting, integrated service models, or family service centers. The greater focus at the state-level on child care and on family support at the local level is understandable considering that child care policies are, in fact, largely shaped at the state level.

The Target Populations

Virtually all the sites noted that they were aiming to increase resources and improve programs for low-income children. But publicly some sites described the initiative in terms of low-income young children, while others targeted all young children.

- Three sites spoke explicitly and publicly of their focus on low-income young children. (In one site, for instance, until the work of the Starting Points initiative was carried out, only affluent children had access to quality early care and education.) In contrast, two sites reported that they publicly emphasized a focus on all children. This was a carefully thought-out strategic decision. In one instance, it was based on the belief that such a broad framing would help build public will and political support across the state, while in another it was thought that it would facilitate a shift from a problem-focused system to a health-promoting service delivery system.

The Strategies

The sites used five broad strategies to advance their site-specific agendas. Sometimes these strategies were employed alone, but most often they were used in a combined fashion, either sequentially or concurrently.

Strategies Used by Starting Points Sites

1) Influence policy
2) Design, expand, and improve programs and services
3) Reach out to new stakeholders and build leadership
4) Promote public awareness and engagement
5) Improve data and promote outcome-oriented policies

Examples of activities to implement the strategies are highlighted below.

Influencing Policy. Almost every site expended a good deal of energy in efforts to influence policy. In three-quarters of the sites, efforts to craft, sustain, or implement policies defined the primary focus of the work. In the remaining sites, the policy focus played a secondary role. Across the sites, four approaches were visible:

- Increasing public and private resources

  Examples: San Francisco allocated funds for the first time for child care, resulting in the High Quality Child Care Initiative that funds a purchasing pool and mental health consultation for child care programs. West Virginia, building on the success of the pilot Starting Points centers it seeded with initiative funds, allocated public dollars to expand the programs to more regions in the state.

- Enacting comprehensive state legislation

  Examples: Florida enacted school readiness legislation to promote local planning and improve children's chances of entering school ready to succeed; West Virginia enacted innovative legislation that required each county to establish a parent training program based on one of three national models.

- Using federal programs to improve basic state policies

  Examples: Rhode Island, building on the federal child care subsidy program, enacted Starting RIte to expand the supply and improve the quality of child care, increase reimbursement rates for child care providers, and expand access to comprehensive services. Pittsburgh provided leadership to the state effort to enact the state Child Health Insurance Program.

- Conducting/staffing strategic policy analysis and planning

  Example: San Francisco staffed the child care component of a welfare reform task force that provided the first comprehensive analysis of the city's child care needs and costs and ultimately played a critical role in the allocation of city dollars targeted for child care.

- Mobilizing advocacy coalitions explicitly to support policy initiatives

  Examples: Florida created the One Hour A Week program to mobilize corporate lobbyists on behalf of child care issues. Pittsburgh founded and staffed Community Voices, a parent advocacy organization to sustain county funding for neighborhood service centers and to lobby at the state level.

- Implementing and monitoring policy initiatives

  Examples: Through Starting Points, Rhode Island created implementation teams involving multiple stakeholders to provide guidance to, and monitor the implementation of, its Starting RIte legislation. Pittsburgh organized a countywide coalition to ensure children were enrolled in CHIP.

Improving Programs. About three-quarters of the sites undertook program design, improvement, and/or expansion as a primary or secondary strategy. Efforts included:

- Expanding and improving existing programs by making them more comprehensive or extending the age range

  Examples: Baltimore expanded its infant home visiting program to include children from birth to three years of age, integrating family support with child development activities. Colorado redesigned a home visiting program for infants into an early literacy program for children from birth to three years old.

- Designing, piloting, and expanding program models within a city or across a state

  Examples: Hawaii piloted informal play groups for parents and children to promote a better understanding of child development and strengthen support for families with Starting Points funds. The program was then expanded throughout the state's four counties. West Virginia piloted its Starting Right family support centers and then, with new public resources, was able to expand them from seven to 18. Boston developed the Circles of Caring program.

- Creating tools to improve quality through program assessments, best practice manuals, and shared standards across early care and education settings

  Examples: West Virginia developed and published a series of issue briefs, documents on best practices, and program assessment guides on family support. Pittsburgh developed a quality assurance guide for its family support programs.

- Creating state or citywide mechanisms, such as child care funds, to support quality improvement initiatives, including helping facilities meet licensing standards and providing loans to child care providers for professional development

  Examples: Vermont created the Child Care Fund in conjunction with a local foundation, San Francisco created its Child Care Fund with the building industry, and Hawaii did so while working with the business community.

- Implementing technical assistance and strategies for program providers and managers

  Examples: North Carolina developed a comprehensive tool kit for its county Smart Start partnerships to

help those managing and making decisions about program resources. Florida conducted training for early childhood providers on the importance of early brain development for child care. West Virginia brokered technical assistance to local Starting Points centers.

- Creating networks of early childhood providers to facilitate advocacy, peer support, and professional development

  Examples: Vermont created networks of family and center-based child care providers throughout the state. West Virginia used Carnegie funds to support the development of a provider advocacy group. Hawaii, building on a strategy implemented by North Carolina, organized Champions for Children, using providers and advocates to furnish information about young children and promote the use of outcome-driven policies with the legislature.

- Expanding the early childhood agenda to incorporate a richer array of strategies.

  Examples: Baltimore coordinated an initiative to expand its Reach Out and Read program citywide. Pittsburgh convened a countywide task force to coordinate early literacy activities. San Francisco implemented a citywide early childhood mental health consultation strategy. West Virginia developed a statewide child health consultant program.

Reaching Out to New Stakeholders and Building New Leadership. In the course of influencing policy and improving programs, many of the sites also developed deliberate strategies to reach out to new stakeholders and partners and to expand the leadership within the early childhood community. Sometimes it was not clear what the outcome of these partnerships was intended to be. Other times there were explicit goals, often related to improving policy or programs. Efforts involved:

- Outreach to the business community

  Example: Florida partnered with the business community through the Child Care Executive Partnership to encourage employers to increase contributions to child care and to support legislative efforts to increase public resources allocated to child care.

- Building parent leadership

  Examples: Boston developed and implemented a parent advocacy training program. West Virginia and Vermont each developed and implemented a parent leadership training program. Pittsburgh developed Community Voices, an advocacy training program for parents.

- Engaging new professional partners

  Example: West Virginia partnered with the state office of maternal and child health and the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to recruit pediatricians to serve as voluntary health consultants to the early childhood programs.

- Creating new foci for broad-based community leadership

  Examples: San Francisco created the Early Childhood Interagency Council, and Pittsburgh created and staffed a series of coalitions to drive interrelated prevention agendas.

Promoting Public Awareness and Engagement. Over the course of the Starting Points initiative, the importance of strategic communications in promoting a children's agenda gained increasing attention. The result was that almost all of the sites engaged in some activities to promote public awareness and engagement. These efforts were central to the work in one site, Florida, and very important in several of the other sites. In the remaining sites, they reflected one strategy among many.

- Using the media

  Example: In Florida, activities to promote public awareness and engagement included a deliberate media cultivation strategy with frequent articles highlighting the Starting Points themes.

- Promoting public policymaker understanding of the importance of early brain development.

  Examples: Florida implemented a brain development curriculum that was used with legislators, child care providers, and the general public in the state and shared widely across the sites. In Pittsburgh, West Virginia, and other states, policy briefs and publications were widely disseminated to promote the understanding of early development and the importance of high quality early childhood and family support programs to families with young children. Rhode Island orchestrated frequent high media coverage events.

- Producing easily accessible information targeted to policymakers through media events, issue briefs, and briefings.

  Examples: Pittsburgh, Rhode Island, and West Virginia developed their own Starting Points information series. In Rhode Island, the information was made available on the Internet.

Improving Outcome and Other Data. Particularly during Phase II of the Starting Points initiative, the sites engaged in activities to improve and/or publicize the data available locally concerning the status of young children.

Examples: Hawaii worked successfully for legislation to promote outcome-driven policies for young children. Rhode Island's Children's Cabinet adopted an outcome-focused approach and then identified benchmark indicators for the outcomes. Vermont added new indicators that focused on early childhood, are analyzed regionally, and are widely available on the Internet.

The first four strategies were in play throughout the initiative, although how the strategies clustered within each site and what activities supported the strategies varied. The strategies also seemed to take on a life of their own. As the work at the sites evolved, it became clear that one strategy and set of activities quite often led to another, and sometimes back again. For example, in one site, the enactment of legislation (a policy strategy) led to organizing stakeholders into an implementation team (building new alliances and leadership). But when the legislation was threatened, the implementation team mobilized in order to hold onto the enacted policies. In another site, an effort to promote public awareness and knowledge about early brain development involving policymakers and the media (building new alliances) not only led to policy changes and increased resources, but also to the promotion of awareness among service providers (building yet more new alliances). Across all sites, focusing on program improvements involved policy efforts to identify the needed resources. The last strategy, focusing on data and outcomes, was used primarily in Phase II, consistent with the call from the foundation to focus more on outcomes.

Mediating Factors

The success of any social change effort is dependent on leadership, vision, and wise implementation choices. It also involves factors, both expected and unexpected, that can facilitate success or pose challenges. The sites reported three clusters of mediating factors. The first cluster involved site-specific factors that were rooted in the local context. The second cluster involved initiative-specific factors that were rooted in the decisions of the Carnegie Corporation about how to administer the grant. The third cluster involved the impact of the national context in a particular site.

Site-Specific Facilitating Factors

Four common site-specific facilitating factors were reported by the sites: (1) the timing of the initiative in the context of site-specific developments; (2) gubernatorial leadership and involvement; (3) a strong national economy; and (4) stable early childhood leadership.

- **The Timing of the Initiative.** Almost half of the sites reported that the opportunity to participate in the Starting Points initiative came at a crucial point in the evolution of their own agendas. For example, one site noted that although it had laid the groundwork for increased policy attention to young children through an earlier effort to promote greater dialogue across agencies involved with young children at the state level and better outreach between state officials and the advocacy community, the effort had faltered. Starting Points provided them with new energy and leadership. Elsewhere, timing was a key element either in advancing a child-focused agenda on which the governor had decided, or in deepening implementation and technical-assistance strategies to institutionalize an on-going effort.
- **Gubernatorial and Other Champions.** High level leadership from governors and mayors was perceived to be an important facilitating factor among the sites that could claim such support. At the same time, the site leaders were keenly aware of the challenge of sustaining an initiative or even a set of priorities identified with one particular political leader through a transition period to a newly elected official (whether or not the same party affiliation was involved). For example, in only one of the sites where gubernatorial leadership changed was it possible to engage the new administration successfully. Several sites also had local foundations as champions, and in at least one site this compensated for a lack of governmental support. In some instances, these foundation relationships predated the Starting Points initiative, while in others, the initiative helped solidify new relationships.
- **A Strong National Economy.** Almost half of the sites noted that the strong national economy made it possible to access new resources for young children more readily than is often possible. But they also recognized that these added resources comprised only a small proportion of what was needed.
- **Relatively Stable Early Childhood Leadership.** A number of sites reported that the existence of a stable leadership group helped jump-start the initiative. These leaders had forged strong ties either

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in the process of implementing other foundation initiatives or in the course of working together to strengthen the state's or city's commitment to young children and families. Whatever the prior history, they reported that working together on a common agenda through Starting Points deepened the collaborative element of these relationships still further. Where stable leadership did not exist, sites noted with appreciation that Starting Points lasted long enough to allow them to establish and begin to solidify new leadership relationships.

Initiative-Specific Facilitating Factors

Three elements were considered positive by virtually all of the sites. These involved the involvement of the Carnegie Corporation, the way in which the grant was structured, and the larger efforts of the corporation to provide a supportive national context for the initiative.

- **The Status of Being Associated with the Carnegie Corporation.** Virtually all the sites commented that being involved with the Carnegie Corporation through a Starting Points grant was a highly facilitating factor. Being associated with the corporation not only enhanced the image of those receiving the grant, but also opened doors in a number of unexpected ways. A site focusing on direct service, for example, reported that Starting Points gave them new credibility in the policy arena. For others, it increased the opportunities to access new foundations and to garner more positive media attention.

- **Carnegie Corporation's Responsiveness to Local Site Needs.** Starting Points was, from the perspective of many of the respondents, a unique experience. In particular, the sites appreciated the fact that the dollars could be used flexibly in response to emerging opportunities or crises. This enabled them to change course when things were not working or when new opportunities arose. Sometimes these midcourse corrections were relatively small, but in two or three instances there were very significant regroupings of leadership and focus that paid off in the end.

- **Recognition and Appreciation of the Learning Culture That Defined the Initiative.** The sites were very appreciative of ways in which the Carnegie Corporation implemented its own commitment to the creation of a continuous learning culture. Largely, the sites felt they were treated respectfully by the Corporation and valued for their perceptions. The opportunities for the site directors to shape the retreats and to engage in cross-site sharing and networking were also valued. This cross-site sharing had an impact. Most of the sites mentioned three or more strategies, models, or ideas that they took from other sites. Perhaps most valuable, however, were the informal peer-to-peer contacts. Providing leadership to efforts to change the customary ways states and communities do business and to garner support for a new agenda is hard and sometimes lonely work. The chance to reflect with peers experiencing the same challenge is therefore highly valued.

- **Connections to a National Network.** Respondents appreciated their connection to a stable national network. In particular, The Finance Project was singled out for its thoughtful and respectful help to the sites during Phase II, when it served as the initiative management office. Several sites noted that the relationship with the Carnegie Corporation facilitated access to national expertise when the time was right. There was also appreciation for the willingness of the various researchers to co-construct approaches and test observations with the sites. In addition, it was noted that members of the national network forged new working relationships, a useful by-product of the Learning, Knowledge, and Development group process.

- **Attempts to Increase Gubernatorial Buy-in.** The broader national efforts of the Carnegie Corporation to promote the importance of an early childhood agenda were also helpful, particularly those activities carried out by the National Governors' Association. Several sites reported that involving the governors' association was very important in increasing or sustaining gubernatorial support for their early childhood agendas.

- **The Carnegie Corporation's Support to Promote a Broader Understanding of the Importance of the**

Earliest Years. During the course of the initiative, brain research in particular and early development in general received full-court attention from the media, propelled by Carnegie Corporation-linked activities such as the I Am Your Child Campaign, *Newsweek* special editions, and the involvement of the White House. Together, this provided a context of unexpected opportunity that was then seized upon and used strategically by all the sites.

In sum, with respect to positive facilitating factors, Starting Points was, from the perspective of many of the respondents, a unique experience. The flexibility of site-specific dollars and the commitment to networking across the sites were perceived uniformly as both powerful and often different from experiences with other foundations.

Site-Specific Factors Posing Challenges

The sites also reported a number of shared challenges, primarily related to the difficulties of envisioning, implementing, and sustaining change. A few were initiative-specific. The common cross-site challenges included:

- **Legislative Challenges.** Virtually all sites (including city sites) reported difficulty not only in getting support for legislation, but in sustaining legislative interest in an area once major legislation had been enacted. A particular concern was how difficult it was to get sufficient resources to implement programs throughout a particular jurisdiction. Two related problems were also noted. One was the discrepancy between the rhetoric about the importance of early childhood and the actual level of funding available to develop high-quality programs. The second is the difficulty of constantly having to educate new legislators about the issues in early childhood.

- **Keeping the Early Childhood Agenda a Priority in the Face of Competing Issues.** A number of the site directors spoke of the dual challenges of keeping the early childhood agenda on the front burner and keeping it broadly bipartisan. This challenge takes on special urgency around the election cycle and during transitions in leadership. (A number of sites, particularly those that had benefited from supportive elected officials, commented on the importance of strategizing about how to promote a substantive commitment to the early childhood agenda from potential candidates for future legislative, gubernatorial, and mayoral offices.)

- **Alignment Challenges.** Several sites addressed the "alignment" challenge, defined as keeping the big picture in view concerning early childhood while working on the smaller details. In sites with active leadership and multiple initiatives, the alignment challenge can be a daunting one. The task involves the simultaneous management of multiple foundation, federal, and state initiatives (each of which may have different foci and different requirements from funders), while trying to fit them together in a way consistent with the particular unifying city or state vision.

- **The "Eyes on the Prize" Outcomes Challenge.** Many of the sites commented on the need to keep asking the basic question: Are conditions and outcomes improving for young children and families? Specific challenges included: the shortage of hard data showing what the sites had accomplished; the lack of a framework for measuring changes at the systems level; the pressure from the legislature to demonstrate child outcomes quickly, even if the policy initiative involved system-level change (e.g. increasing the reimbursement rate for child care providers); the effort to ensure that real change is visible at the local level, not just at the state level; and the complexity of establishing meaningful quality program and service model indicators. These are all infrastructure-related issues that make it possible to address the basic question, but they are not issues that are often explicitly addressed by policymakers or foundations.

Initiative-Specific Factors Posing Challenges

The initiative-specific challenges reported centered on three themes: how the evaluation process was dealt with in the Starting Points initiative, the difficulty of addressing all the goals set forth by Starting Points, and the way in which the initiative ended.

- **The Evaluation Challenge.** Perhaps because it was not clear from the beginning how long the Starting Points initiative was to be, there was very little attention paid to developing an evaluation plan either for the sites individually or for the initiative collectively until Phase II. Further, although the sites had been asked to develop individual site-specific evaluation plans, they received very little technical assistance in developing these. They also reported difficulties in trying to develop working relationships with local evaluators who were not connected to the larger initiative. Similarly, no overall plan for a cross-site evaluation emerged until Phase II, at

The flexibility of site-specific dollars and the commitment to networking across the sites were perceived uniformly as both powerful and often different from experiences with other foundations.

which point, NCCP was asked to develop this descriptive assessment. Although the sites were pleased with the idea of a descriptive assessment and participated actively in developing the framework, they too would have preferred more planned attention early on as to the best ways to extract the lessons and outcomes from Starting Points. As one respondent said: "The corporation did not have an up-front evaluation plan and tried to develop one mid-way. In the end, they handled this well and agreed to a descriptive evaluation."

- **The Failure of the Initiative to Lead to Deepened Connections Across Early Childhood, Child Health, and Family Support in Most Sites.** Several respondents commented on the inability of advocates, reformers, legislators, and policymakers to move beyond categorical approaches and create a vision for a delivery system that would link health, nutrition, family support, maternal health, and education in any but a token way. Developing an integrated early childhood system seems to take longer and is more difficult to develop than many had anticipated.

- **The Ending.** There was a subdued but very real sense of disappointment that although the materials developed by the sites and the national organizations have been widely distributed, there was no real follow-up to the intense four and one-half-year experience. It just ended. The network had hoped the corporation might provide limited support for continued networking among site leaders or the involvement of site leaders as consultants to other initiatives. (The corporation did fund a national assistance center in North Carolina, however).

Challenges reported less consistently include: underestimating the need for support and technical assistance at the local level, failing to mobilize and keep the larger early childhood community on the same page, and difficulty in getting public awareness campaigns off the ground. Taken together, however, these were minor issues in comparison to the overall support the Starting Points initiative received from its participants.

Impacts and Outcomes

This assessment examines two types of accomplishments: observable changes and process changes.

Observable Accomplishments

The observable accomplishments linked to the Starting Points initiative cover a broad reach and have been alluded to throughout this report. Many of them are also described in the materials produced by the sites.

Observable changes include:

- Substantial legislative and policy gains.
- Significantly increased public and private resources, especially for child care.
- Expanded networks of services and new service models.
- Expanded advocacy for young children at both the city and state level in some sites.
- Strengthened in-state (and national) capacity for training and technical assistance on the implementation of comprehensive early childhood initiatives.
- New partnerships with the business community in selected sites.
- Expanded family support programs and deepened attention to child care quality issues.
- More focused leadership development strategies aimed at parents.
- New models for media and public awareness campaigns and the use of strategic communication strategies on behalf of the early childhood agenda.
- Dissemination of tools to track and promote quality improvement in early childhood settings.
- New forums—coalitions, councils, and organizations—to drive the next set of activities across the sites.
- Deepened leadership capacity around early childhood issues across the sites.

Achieving the kinds of changes highlighted above almost always required an "entrepreneurial spirit" from the leaders, enabling them to seize or enlarge upon potential opportunities. The site experiences took on a dynamic of their own. For instance, in the beginning, no site had the explicit goal of enacting a specific type of legislation, nor could any site have anticipated the shape that the policy gains took. Yet there were many significant policy "wins." Moreover, these accomplishments are all consistent with the initial aims of the Starting Points initiative—to focus on systems change, program enhancement, and community mobilization strategies. Consistent with this, although in a few sites, the work directly impacted children and families, in most the impacts were indirect and not explicitly tracked.

Process Changes

Process changes include:

- *New relationships among leaders.* The Starting Points initiative seeded a whole set of new relationships for many of the site leaders and their teams. In some instances, Starting Points led to new partnerships among advocates and government officials at both the city and state level. Elsewhere, it solidified or deepened preexisting relationships not only among advocates, but among the direct service provider community as well.

- *Conceptual reorganization.* Examples of conceptual reorganization reported by the sites include: a broadening of the boundaries of public health within a major public agency; an increased willingness to incorporate family support principles into policy decisions; and a new commitment to integrating child health, child care, and family support into the agenda of early childhood advocacy organizations. While in and of themselves these do not seem remarkable, they hold, if sustained, the promise of setting the stage for the development of a much more coherent advocacy and policy agenda on behalf of young children and families. Several sites also reported a newfound respect for the importance of technical assistance and networking to sustain a vision and promote effective implementation of new policies and practice approaches.

- *New ways of working together.* The combination of the new relationships and the stretched vision led, in some sites, to new ways of working. In one site, for instance, the site, for the first time, brought together public officials, foundations, and child advocates around a shared agenda. It is an approach that they plan to continue. Another site used the initiative to rethink its own modus operandi. Their hope is that they will be able to sustain "less a product or a specific plan," and more of the reflective processes that they developed in the course of the initiative and that enabled them to take their vision to the next level. Yet another site was able to formalize an agreement among different state agencies about a vision and modus operandi with respect to early childhood policies and practices.

From the perspective of the sites, these new relationships, conceptual frameworks, and ways of working were among the most valued legacy of the experience. Virtually all the participants believed that the strengthened relationships among stakeholders would last beyond the life of the Starting Points initiative, even as leaders changed roles. They noted that Starting Points provided an opportunity for key actors to come together over time on specific tasks and agendas. This, in turn, allowed them to do business in new ways. Finally, although many of the site leaders came to their roles in Starting Points with clear leadership track records, participating in the initiative served as a kind of higher-level leadership development experience and reinforced the image that they were individuals who could make things happen. This, too, was perceived as a powerful legacy of the initiative.

The participants attribute these process changes to three factors. Some noted that the broad framing of the initial Starting Points report, with its four goals, helped set the stage. Others linked it to the experience of being part of the larger Starting Points network, and learning how others approached similar challenges. For most, however, the roots were in the experiences at the sites, as they and their colleagues invented new kinds of collaborations and relationships. Conceptual stretching of the boundaries and institutionalizing new ways of working together may, in the long run, be a necessary (although not sufficient) engine to drive continuing change and improvements on behalf of young children and families, allowing the legacy of an initiative like Starting Points to live on, even as the specific grant ends.

SECTION 3 Starting Points in a Larger Perspective: Summary and Lessons

THE BIG PICTURE

Systems change is a complex, iterative process. Leadership is key, relationships count, and data, increasingly, are central. Moreover, there is growing recognition that this country has, for too long, had a kind of "programitis"—a willingness from both policymakers and the philanthropic community to fund individual or demonstration programs. What have not been so well supported are efforts to promote and sustain leadership development, strategic vision, goal setting, and planned, supported expansion and technical assistance in management and community building. Yet these are all necessary to institutionalizing new ways of responding to young children and families and providing a counterbalance to support that is solely dependent upon political leaders. Starting Points represents a foundation approach that aims to respond to this need. In effect, it allowed the sites to drive the agenda in a way consistent with their policy and political context. As such, Starting Points represents an example of philanthropic devolution —the counterpart of the devolution process that is transforming governmental federal, state, and, sometimes, local relationships.

Consistent with a devolution approach, there was enormous variation across the sites with respect to auspices, emphases, and strategies. For example, some sites were housed within government, others included government officials as equal and important partners, and still others saw themselves as advocates outside of government. Some focused almost exclusively on program and service delivery improvement, others combined these with policy and public engagement strategies. While most focused primary attention on child care and early education, several took strengthening family support programs and policies as a primary objective. A few included some attention to child health. Some were in jurisdictions that already had a vision of where they were going and how to get there; others, particularly the city sites, used the Starting Points grant to develop a vision. In most sites, the approach that evolved seemed to fit with the local issues and culture in interesting and sometimes unexpected ways. For example, in a state that had many formal interagency and community-based forums, the energy to implement Starting Points came from an informal set of partnerships. In contrast, a city that had been described as "service-rich," but lacking a focal point for policy agenda-setting, created a formal leadership mechanism.

Notwithstanding this variation, the sites basically used five core strategies— sometimes alone, sometimes in combination—to achieve their goals. These involved efforts to: (1) influence policies and increase resources; (2) design, expand, and improve services; (3) build new alliances and leadership among early childhood leaders and others, such as parents; (4) promote public awareness and engagement; and (5) improve data and promote outcome-oriented policies.

By the end of the four-year initiative, virtually all of the sites were able to show real accomplishments, although the depth and potential longer-term impact seemed to vary. In the process, several sites experienced major changes in leadership and/or direction. In a few sites, the process did not gel until well into Phase II. Key factors in the way the initiative evolved at the sites included local external forces, particularly the support of political leaders. Examples of serendipity also surfaced. At one site, for instance, the Starting Points leadership team was able to capitalize on the visibility and relationships that it had developed early in the project to become a key actor in a larger, second foundation initiative. That, in turn, made it possible for the team to achieve its original goals. None of this had been anticipated. Also noteworthy is the way in which the Carnegie Corporation provided a context of national support as it administered the grants at the sites.

This summary picture raises two important questions:

1) Did Starting Points achieve its goals?

2) What are the key lessons for future funders of large-scale initiatives?

Did Starting Points Achieve Its Goals?

The Phase I Starting Points proposal asked the participants to show "demonstrated progress" toward mobilizing stakeholders, strengthening public and private sector policies, improving the quality of programs, and encouraging continuous learning and development. The Phase II proposal required the participants to show progress in "establishing and meeting measurable and concrete outcomes based on systematic strategic plans that concentrate on program and policy development, evaluation, and dissemination of model approaches on a citywide or statewide basis."

This report has tried to describe the ways in which the sites sought to meet the expectations set forth in the Starting Points initiative, allowing the reader to draw his or her own conclusions. The assessment has not sought to compare the sites to each other, but rather to paint an overall picture. This picture suggests that the sites, overall, met the expectations set forth for them, and that the Starting Points initiative should be viewed as a success.

But returning to the initial goals set forth by the Carnegie Corporation does raise an interesting set of issues. Given the activities reported here, the initiative clearly met the goals set forth in the first request for proposals. But with respect to the Phase II goals, calling for more attention to outcomes, the picture is more complicated.

During Phase II, the sites did focus more attention on concrete and measurable outcomes, with many of them working directly on developing an infrastructure that will eventually provide aggregate child-focused information, along with family, system, and community indicators. On the other hand, it is not clear that strategic planning drove the program and policy development in the sites. Rather, it seemed more related to serendipity, transfer of knowledge across the sites, and a willingness to take "smart risks."

The findings concerning site evaluation and dissemination of model approaches are also mixed. Sites received very few resources and relatively little outside help with the evaluation process, nor did the Carnegie Corporation see the local evaluations as part of a larger evaluation scheme. Thus, while the informal learning culture was powerful, the formal one was less so.

With respect to dissemination of program models on a city or statewide basis, the picture is also mixed. In several sites, programs (sometimes seeded with Carnegie support) were expanded with public dollars. Yet, in others, support for expansion had not been secured by the end of the initiative. The pattern of cross-site knowledge transfer of innovative ideas was clearly demonstrated. By the end of Starting Points, materials that had been developed—either by the sites or members of the Learning, Knowledge, and Development group, or both—had been widely disseminated to the larger early childhood community.

In sum, although it is questionable whether the sites literally met the initiative's Phase II goals, they did make substantial progress toward them. How this progress is interpreted depends upon the evidentiary standard for success in a comprehensive systems change initiative where so many variables are uncontrollable. There may be one interpretation from a policy perspective and another from a scientific point of view.

Key Lessons for Funders and Policymakers

On the Culture of Foundation Initiatives

As part of the closing interview for this assessment, site directors were asked to reflect on the lessons for funders and policymakers of sponsoring large-scale initiatives. Their responses focused on resources, relationships, and expectations.

1) **Even relatively limited foundation dollars, if used strategically, can be a catalyst for large-scale system change.** Overall, the Carnegie Corporation invested a relatively small amount of money in each site. Yet the combination of limited but flexible dollars, the status of being a grantee of the Carnegie Corporation, supportive foundation leadership, and access to national leaders enabled the sites to accomplish a great deal. This, in virtually all instances, set the stage for continuing progress.

2) **Flexible funding, when coupled with clear and "big goals," enables grantees to be strategically opportunistic and respond to unexpected challenges.** The Starting Points experience suggests that foundation resources make it possible for a state or a community to take "smart risks" and to build support for new approaches and ideas. As one site director noted, "Many good ideas disappear unless there is a little bit of flexible money to bring people together to name, develop, and test the ideas." But given budgetary restrictions, local, and state governments often have difficulty identifying flexible dollars to promote smart risks in a timely way. Flexible foundation funds may also make it possible for grantees to make midcourse corrections and to spend money at different rates—perhaps more

Foundation resources make it possible for a state or a community to take "smart risks" and to build support for new approaches and ideas.

slowly during the first year when relationship building is so important and then more rapidly later on.

3) **Foundations can be a significant force in helping grantees gain access to new resources.** The Starting Points experience suggests that foundation help in enabling grantees to access other foundation, private sector, or even additional public funds is a highly valued function and should be incorporated into strategic foundation planning. The sites that deliberately reached out, often with the help of the Carnegie Corporation, to local foundations saw those local foundations become more engaged in the issues and more willing to target resources to them.

4) **Using foundation resources to help change the larger policy context for multisite initiatives, or at least to situate site expectations in the larger policy context, can provide a kind of "cover" and legitimacy to the sites that can enhance their success.** The experience of the Starting Points grantees suggests that focusing both on the sites and the larger national context can set up a mutually reinforcing dynamic, at least during the particular national political context that characterized the Starting Points years. Whether this can occur in all political contexts is not clear, but it certainly should be considered.

5) **Allowing grantees to invest in relationships, especially at the beginning of a grant period, can have a long-term payoff.** The sites involved in Starting Points were convinced that creating strong relationships with current and potential partners and stakeholders in the beginning of the initiative would pay off in the end in support for a shared vision and political agenda. Those sites that did not take the time to nurture such relationships, assuming a broader consensus than truly existed, had to backtrack and sometimes lost opportunities. The Starting Points experience confirms an often repeated lesson, but one not always incorporated into the expectation of foundations (or legislators among others)—mounting systems change agendas involves relationship-based *and* strategic substantive efforts.

6) **Promoting cross-site knowledge transfer, leadership development, and a learning culture throughout the course of a multisite initiative can help to sustain the gains of the initiative.** For the grantees, one of the most valued aspects of participating in a large-scale foundation initiative is the opportunity to engage with peers through both peer-to-peer technical assistance and relationship-building activities. Scheduling periodic opportunities for shared learning and planning away from day-to-day pressures is one of the "gifts" a foundation can bring.

7) **Having mechanisms in place to link grantees with timely and flexible peer and expert technical assistance can make a difference, particularly in emerging areas such as strategic communication and outcome design and management.** There is growing awareness that building systems of support for children and families today involves not just program and policy influence, but the effective use of strategic communications and data. Based on the Starting Points experience, a foundation's role in facilitating access to experts in areas with a rapidly developing emerging knowledge base can be critical to promoting an agenda and building leadership capacity.

8) **Planned, periodic opportunities for collective, cross-site strategic reflection and testing of assumptions, goals, and pathways by the participants can enhance the impact of a multisite foundation initiative.** The Starting Points experience suggests that most leaders who implement foundation grants are in jobs that give them little time for reflection. Building in time for thoughtful, facilitated reflection through retreats, theory of change exercises, or other methods is perceived as a valued luxury to those on the ground. Such reflection can also facilitate midcourse corrections and serve to protect against too loose a structure that can leave the grantees floundering.

9) **Funders should be willing to help sites use the foundation money to meet its goals but also the sites' goals. Such an approach, reflecting philanthropic devolution, is highly valued by grantees.** No one foundation initiative or set of initiatives will

The Starting Points participants expressed the hope that future foundation initiatives might address these poverty-linked challenges more directly.

be a magic fix to improve outcomes for young children and ensure that parents have access to the supports and services to better meet their parenting responsibilities. Building an early childhood systems change agenda in states and communities is an interactive, long-term challenge that requires broad and sustained support. Where foundations recognize this—crafting new initiatives with broad outcomes and giving states and communities the flexibility to use funds in ways that fit their needs while building on what has already occurred in the site—the impacts are likely to be more powerful.

10) **Setting clear substantive and time-linked expectations early on (or at least establishing a process by which these will be set) and deciding how to measure success is important to grantees. The time frame for initiatives should be commensurate with the size of the goals and the level of change that is contemplated.** Grantees strive to understand and meet the expectations of foundations or other funders. Therefore, clear expectations are not only important to the foundation, they are also important to the grantees, enabling them to be more strategic. The Starting Points experience suggests the importance of funders deciding early on whether they expect their goals to be met, or if their goals are intended to serve more as a catalyst for further action. It is also important that funders consider what success would look like.

Lessons for Funders Regarding Substantive Directions

Based on the collective experience and insights of the Starting Points grantees, the next generation of early childhood initiatives should address the following themes:

1) **Supporting parents and other caregivers in their ability to promote healthy emotional and cognitive outcomes for their children.** Raising children in a complex society where all families face enormous pressures and expectations is very challenging. Finding new ways to increase the voices of parents and other caregivers at the policy table was an important subtext in the Starting Points sites. It is a theme to be developed.

2) **Building early childhood systems to promote healthy early development and family support.** States are increasingly investing in early childhood, but much of the focus remains on creating small programs. Some of the inter-related system building, policy, and practice questions that need to be explored more fully are: how to promote and sustain community decisionmaking mechanisms; how to build the capacity to meet the real needs of different types of families (low-wage families, families with more intensive needs, families with infants); how to maximize the power of federal dollars that flow to the states; and, above all, how to ensure that all children do enter school ready to succeed.

3) **Deepening philanthropic and governmental attention to develop the infrastructure to support outcome-driven policies.** Transforming public policy for young children and families from a program, service-utilization framework to an aggregate outcome-based framework requires paying for and building new kinds of accountability and data structures. While the work required to achieve this transformation has been recognized by the federal government through a project involving selected states (including some of the Starting Points states),[19] it still is far from a widespread commitment. Unless these efforts can grow, calls for outcomes in both philanthropic and governmental initiatives may remain hollow.

4) **Integrating family economic security agendas with child health, child development, and family support agendas more effectively.** Nationally, more than 40 percent of all young children in this country are growing up in families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the poverty level. These families need both economic security and access to supportive services. The Starting Points participants expressed the hope that future foundation initiatives might address these poverty-linked challenges more directly. Similarly, they recognized that there needs to be more attention focused on two other related issues, ethnicity and immigrant children.

Conclusion

This assessment confirms that Starting Points was the catalyst for concentrated networking and activities in 11 sites, most of which had, in the end, changed their threshold levels of expectation, communication, vision, policy, or practice regarding important aspects of the well-being of young children. In the process, the initiative deepened the capacity of a cadre of leaders who, in turn, now view themselves as conscious and deliberate change agents. The "quiet crisis" described in the original Starting Points report is far from over. But the Starting Points initiative offers lessons for the future on how to continue the momentum that it and other recent efforts have generated on behalf of the youngest children and families. It is hoped that these lessons will powerfully inform the next generation of efforts to improve outcomes for children and their families.

Starting Points was the catalyst for concentrated networking and activities which changed threshold levels of expectation, communication, vision, policy, or practice regarding important aspects of the well-being of young children.

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Endnotes

1. Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children (1994). *Starting Points: Meeting the needs of our youngest children*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

2. These included the I Am Your Child public awareness campaign, support to the National Governors' Association and the National Conference of State Legislators, successful efforts to engage the White House in a high-level dialogue about the meaning of research findings on early brain development, and support for national activities not directly related to Starting Points. An example of such an activity is the National Center for Children in Poverty's bi-annual analysis of state policymaking efforts on behalf of young children and families.

3. In 1996, 18 states were investing in family support and child development programs for infants and toddlers; by 2000, that number was 31. State investment in programs for preschoolers has increased significantly. See Cauthen, N.; Knitzer, J. & Ripple, C. (2000). *Map and track: State initiatives for young children and families*. New York: NY. National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.

4. See endnote 1.

5. The National Center for Children in Poverty in collaboration with the Harvard Family Research Project and the Starting Points Strategic Partners during Phase I, at the Corporation's request, developed *Starting Points: Challenging the Quiet Crisis: A Description of the Starting Points Sites* in 1997.

6. For more information on how the sites describe themselves, see also The Finance Project. (2000). *Voices of experience: A catalogue of resources from the Starting Points sites*. Washington, DC: The Finance Project and New York, NY: The Carnegie Corporation of New York.

7. See for example, Sazer-O'Donnell, N. & Galinsky, E. (2000). *The seven lessons of early childhood public engagement*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York and The Families and Work Institute. Watson, S. & Westheimer, M. (2000). *Financing family resources centers: A guide to sources and strategies*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York and Washington, DC: The Finance Project. Langford, B. H. (2000). *Creating dedicated local revenue sources for early care and education*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York and Washington, DC: The Finance Project. Watson, S.; Squires, B.; & Schafer, P. (2000). *Think global, document local: Using data and information technologies to move the early childhood agenda*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation and Washington, DC: The Finance Project. Knitzer, J. (2000). *Using mental health strategies to move the early childhood agenda and promote school readiness*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York and National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.

8. During Phase I, the initiative had strong support from then Governor Romer as well as from a leader in the business community. A political transition and the death of the business champion dramatically changed the Phase II context. Thus, while there have been policy activities in the state, particularly involving the business community, and efforts to improve child care that had been started in Phase I, these have not been part of the site's agenda.

9. Proposition 10, the California Children and Families Act, passed in 1998, grew in part out of the I Am Your Child campaign. Funded with revenues from a tobacco tax, in FY 2000, its approximately $690 million was distributed to the counties for investments in early childhood. The Carnegie Corporation provided support related to the implementation of Proposition 10.

10. The term 'logic model' is used to capture the underlying assumptions about how change happens among those involved. Typically, the assumptions are implicit, although increasingly evaluators and others are trying to make them explicit.

11. In NCCP's role as part of the network of national organizations, there were several group site visits in conjunction with the retreats, and one site was visited by NCCP staff to understand a special project that it had carried out.

12. See Philliber Research Associates. (1999). *The Starting Points initiative: Its progress in 1999*. Accord, NY: Philliber Research Associates.

13. The state-level data reported here are all drawn from Cauthen, N.; Knitzer, J.; & Ripple, C. (2000). *Map and track: State initiatives for young children and families—Highlights of findings*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.

14. It was not possible to get comparable city-specific data.

15. The state data are from a state-by-state analysis of U.S. Census data from 1994 to 1998 as reported in *Map and Track 2000*. The national data are from: U.S. Census Bureau. *Poverty in the United States: 1999* (Current Population Reports, Consumer Income Series P60-210). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

16. See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2000). Child Care and Development Block Grant/Child Care and Development Fund: Average Monthly Families and Children Served (FY 1999) [table] <http:www acf.dhhs gov/programs/ccb/research/99acf800/chldserv htm>. These percentages are based on estimates of the number of children who would be eligible for subsidies if each state adopted the maximum federal eligibility guideline, then comparing this figure to the number of children actually served.

17. Recent data on state expenditures for child development and family support programs reported in *Map and Track 2000* indicate that state spending increased 90 percent between 1998 and 2000, including more than doubling the percent of funds spent on programs for infants and toddlers. See Cauthen, Knitzer, & Ripple in endnote 3.

18. This is based on a comparison of data reported for each of the Starting Points states in the 1996, 1998, and 2000 editions of *Map and track: State initiatives for young children and families*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.

19. See the Project on Child Indicators, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

Appendix A: Format for Final Progress Narrative Report for Starting Points Grantees

Below are a series of questions that will be helpful for the NCCP assessment of Starting Points and will also meet the Carnegie Corporation's requirements for the final narrative report. We have attached a revised version of your site profile (developed by NCCP) for you to review as background. If you have any comments on the profile, please fax edits to Priscilla Gonzalez ((F) 212-544-4201 and (T) 212-304-7149), or share your comments with us during our conversation about the final report.

[Note: You still need to do the financial report as is required by the Carnegie Corporation and submit copies of all new products (i.e., products that have not been submitted to the Carnegie Corporation previously) to the Corporation.]

1. Update on Activities, Accomplishments, and Barriers Since Last Progress Report

Please identify the major activities that you have undertaken to address the four Starting Points goals since the last progress report was submitted to the Carnegies Corporation in July 1999. (If you have not worked on a goal, that is fine.)

a) What have been your primary activities and accomplishments in meeting the four Starting Points goals during the year since you submitted the last progress report (if they are not already included in your site NCCP profile)? Please be specific.

b) What evidence do you have to support the Starting Points accomplishment you identified above (e.g. increased resources, more children served, better child indicators, etc)?

c) What were the major challenges that the Starting Points initiative faced during this year?

d) What factors (internal, external, unexpected opportunities, etc.) were most helpful in facilitating your work during this year?

2. The Overall Initiative

The following questions are intended to provide an overall perspective on the Starting Points initiative.

a) What, from your perspective, were the most significant accomplishments of your site's Starting Points initiative during the entire funding period? What evidence do you have of these accomplishments?

b) What were the key factors that led to these accomplishments?

c) What were the most significant challenges your site's initiative has faced since it began (e.g., getting governmental buy in, transition in administration, lack of documentation of positive changes)?

d) What new partners and/or new leadership, if any, came to the "early childhood table" in the course of the Starting Points initiative? Are they still partners? Please comment.

e) What has been the balance in your initiative between a focus on all young children and families and a focus on low-income children and families? Please explain the reason for this focus.

f) What do you consider to be the most significant "failure" with respect to what you hoped the Starting Points initiative would accomplish (e.g., inability to access stable funding), and what factors in your particular context account for this "failure"?

g) To the extent that anyone can predict, what, in your view, will be sustained at your site once the Carnegie initiative is over? What has promoted or impeded sustainability?

h) Regardless of the sustainability of the initiative, what do you see as the longer-term impact of the Starting Points initiative at your site (e.g., changes in intergovernmental relations)?

i) What were the most important strategies, models, ideas, etc. that you took from other Starting Points initiatives to your site in the course of the initiative?

j) What would you like to communicate to others about successful strategies and models? How have you already tried to communicate this information (e.g., products, meetings, etc)? Please be specific.

k) In what ways, if any, has the vision for, or direction of, the overall Starting Points initiative changed in response to pressures/opportunities from:

- TANF legislation
- "School readiness" policies
- Other changes in the federal landscape

3. Reflections and Lessons

a) What advice would you give to:

- A new manager of a comprehensive, multi-strategy early childhood initiative?
- Funders of comprehensive, multistrategy, early childhood initiatives?
- Those providing technical assistance to such initiatives?

b) In retrospect, if you could start this initiative all over again, what would you do (or advise your site to do) differently?

c) As you reflect on the course of the initiative, what do you see as its value added in the context of your particular political, fiscal, and service delivery realities?

d) Is there anything else that you would like to add that would give NCCP or the Carnegie Corporation new insights into your site's experience with the Starting Points initiative?

	California	Colorado	Florida	Hawaii	Maryland	Massachusetts	North Carolina	Pennsylvania	Rhode Island	Vermont	West Virginia
Demographic Indicators											
Number of children 0–6[1]	3,288,388	316,351	1,132,908	100,451	467,056	512,515	588,322	950,528	68,517	49,382	110,974
State median income for families with young children[2]	$34,300	$43,000	$32,600	$40,275	$55,550	$48,800	$37,780	$40,551	$38,104	$37,020	$22,100
% of young children in poverty[3]	28.7%	15.0%	25.7%	15.9%	13.8%	15.6%	22.7%	18.2%	20.1%	14.3%	35.2%
% of young children below 200% of the federal poverty level, FPL[4]	52.2%	36.6%	50.1%	41.6%	31.2%	32.4%	44.6%	39.9%	40.7%	41.2%	64.6%
% of low-income young children whose parents are employed full- or part-time[5]	40.0%	56.0%	52.9%	56.6%	47.7%	44.3%	63.0%	50.4%	54.6%	65.3%	39.9%
% of young children with at least one parent working full-time who remain in poverty[6]	12.4%	4.0%	8.5%	3.9%	2.4%	1.8%	6.7%	5.2%	2.9%	6.5%	9.4%
State Income Policies											
State income tax threshold is at or above the federal poverty level for a single-parent family of three[7]	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Refundable earned income credit[8]	N	Y	N	N	Y [3]	Y [4]	N	N	N	Y [5]	
Refundable dependent care credit[9]	N	Y [1]	N	Y [2]	N	N	N	N	N	N	
Minimum wage above federal level of $5.15[10]	Y ($5.75)	N	N	Y ($5.25)	N	Y ($6.00)	N	N	Y ($5.65)	Y ($5.75)	
Maximum annual TANF benefit for a single-parent family of three with no earnings[11]	$7,512	$4,272	$3,636	$6,840	$5,004	$6,780	$3,264	$4,836	$6,648	$7,464	$3,936
Federal Child Care Subsidy Policies											
Estimated % of children eligible for CCDF served[12]	13.0%	11.0%	8.0%	9.0%	8.0%	13.0%	16.0%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	25.0%
Maximum payment rate set at or above 75th percentile of market rate[13]	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N		Y	
Co-payment does not exceed 10% of income for single-parent family of three at 150% FPL[14]	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Child Health Policies											
Maximum Medicaid/Children's Insurance Program (CHIP) eligibility levels (0–6)[15]	250%	185%	200%	185% 133%	200%	200%	200%	235%	250%	300%	150%
Parent eligibility level for Medicaid as % of federal poverty level, FPL[16]	157%	45%	71%	115%	46%	133%	56%	71%	193%	158%	30%

DATA SOURCES

NCCP analysis of March Current Population Surveys, U.S. Census Bureau. Data averaged across 1994, 1996, 1998.

[1] NCCP analysis of March Current Population Surveys, U.S. Census Bureau. Data averaged across 1994, 1996, 1998.

[2] NCCP analysis of March Current Population Surveys, U.S. Census Bureau. Data averaged across 1994, 1996, 1998.

[3] NCCP analysis of March Current Population Surveys, U.S. Census Bureau. Data averaged across 1994, 1996, 1998.

[4] NCCP analysis of March Current Population Surveys, U.S. Census Bureau. Data averaged across 1994, 1996, 1998.

[5] NCCP analysis of March Current Population Surveys, U.S. Census Bureau. Data averaged across 1994, 1996, 1998.

[6] Johnson, N., Zahradnik, R., & McNichol, E.C. (2000). *State income tax burdens on low-income families in 1999*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Data are from tax year 1999.

[7] Johnson, N. (2000). *A hand up: How state earned income tax credits help working families escape poverty, 2000 edition*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Data are from November 2000.

[8] Steinschneider, J., Donahue, E.H., Campbell, N.D., & Williams, V.L. (1998). *Making care less taxing: Improving state child and dependent care tax provisions*. Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center, with updates from National Woman's Law Center (2000). Recent changes in state child and dependent care tax provisions. Tax year 2000 [unpublished table]. Data are from December 1999.

[9] U.S. Department of Labor. (2000). Minimum wage laws in the states. Minimum Wage and Overtime Premium Pay Standards Applicable to Nonsupervisory NONFARM Private Sector Employment Under State and Federal Laws, August 1, 2000 [table]. <http://www.dol.gov/dol/esa/public/minwage/america.htm>. Data are from August 2000.

[10] State Policy Documentation Project. (2000). TANF cash assistance Categorical and Financial Eligibility Rules [table]. <http://www.spdp.org/tanfcat/~tin.htm>. Data are from June 2000.

[11] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2000). Child Care and Development Block Grant/Child Care and Development Fund: Children served in fiscal year 1999 (average monthly) [table]. <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ccb/data.htm>. Data are from fiscal year 1999. This table updates the information reported in U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (1999). *Access to child care for low-income working families*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[12] Blank, H. & Poersch, N.O. (1999). *State developments in child care and early education, 1999*. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund. Data from June 1999.

[13] Blank, H. & Poersch, N.O. (1999). *State developments in child care and early education, 1999*. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund. Data from June 1999.

[14] Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2000). State income eligibility guidelines for children's Medicaid and separate child health insurance programs. <http://cbpp.org/stshi/stelig.htm>. Data from April 2000. See also: Cauthen, N.K., Kreiter, J., & Ripple, C. (2000). *Map and track: State initiatives for children and families*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.

[15] Guyer, J. & Mann, C. (1999). *Employed but not insured: A state-by-state analysis of the number of low-income working parents who lack health insurance*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Data are from February 1999.

NOTES

[1] Maximum credit for a family with two or more dependents $720.

[2] Maximum credit for a family with two or more dependents $1,200.

[3] As a percent of the federal credit: 15.0%.

[4] As a percent of the federal credit: 10.0%.

[5] As a percent of the federal credit: 32.0%.

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